EXCITING MYSTERIES

DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY

FEB. 15
10¢

RILEY DILLON
in
"The Eye of Sheba"
By H. Bedford-Jones

SERGEANT RIORDAN
in
"The Four Petrified Men"
By Victor Maxwell

The LADY from HELL
In Another Adventure

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Wouldn't you like to get thru the winter *without* CATCHING COLD?

Your chances of doing so are better if you will treat a cold for what it is — an infection calling for germicidal action

SOMETHING new is going on—something that will interest you if you are subject to colds and sore throat.

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Listerine

—relieves Colds and Sore Throat

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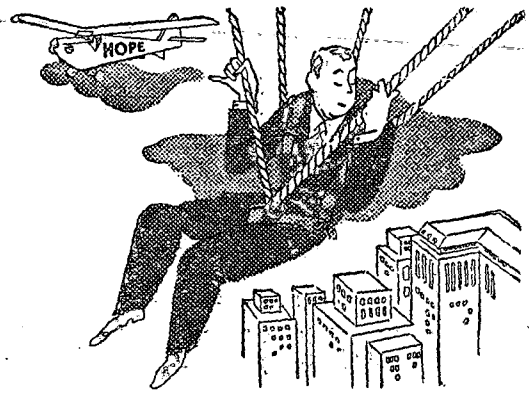

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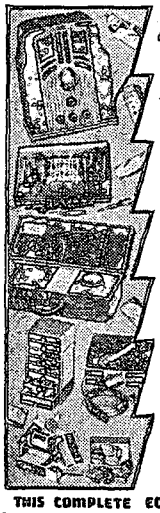

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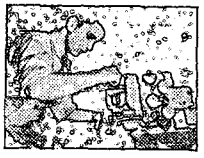

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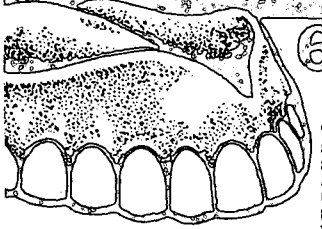

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Dr. T. A. Ellis

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The EYE of SHEBA

Irish Wit Against Oriental Cunning — Riley Dillon Versus the Dark Man in Dark Glasses — with the Gem of Solomon as the Prize

A Riley Dillon Novelette by

H. Bedford-Jones

CHAPTER I

Jewel of the East

RILEY DILLON was breakfasting in his room at the Waldorf this morning. Very much in his room. He was breakfasting in retrospect. In thoughtful appraisal of the previous evening. He even ignored his morning paper to think about it.

His keen, whimsical features were restless and frowning, the gray eyes cold beneath their black brows. As he lit his cigarette over his second cup of coffee, his gaze fell on the gaily-covered, gaily-decorated little brochure at his elbow, beside the [illegible]ead morning paper. He winced slightly at this souvenir of the Charity Bazaar. Astrological forecast, indeed! His horoscope

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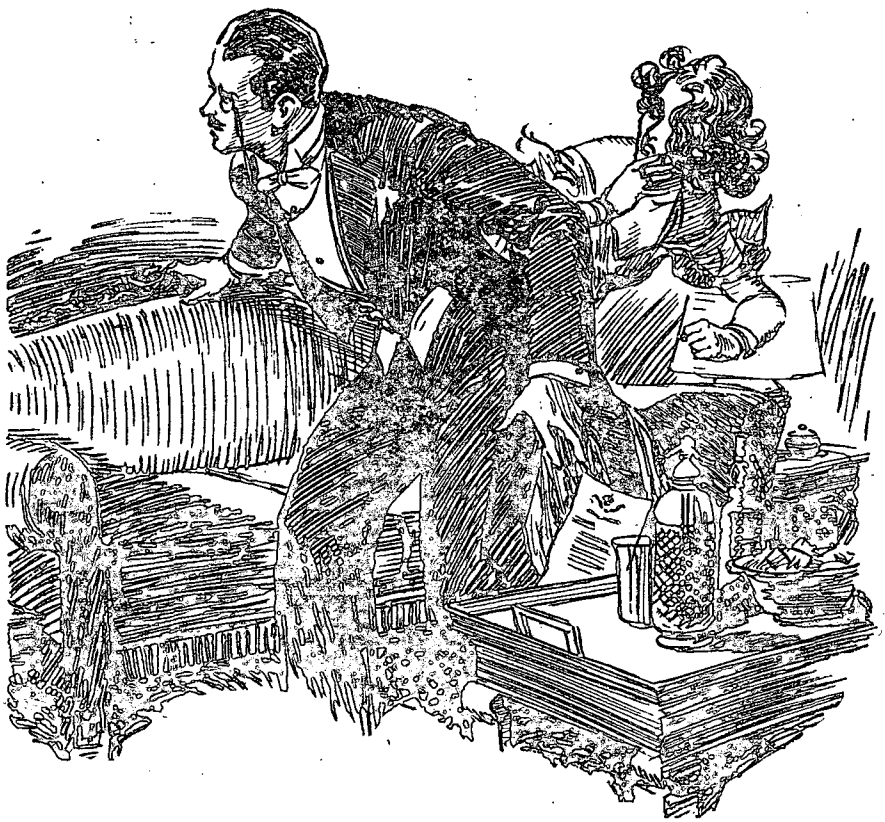
The door was flung open. Count Rosati stood there



stared up at him, to flick back his thoughts anew to the previous night, to the woman, to the jewel.

He was devoutly glad now that he had gone to the Charity Bazaar. The woman, the jewel, the man—hm! He could sense that the woman, behind her veil, was beautiful. No matter; the world did not lack beautiful women for Riley Dillon. The man with the dark glasses, he could sense, was a rascal. No matter, again; the world did not lack rascals for Riley Dillon. But the cat's-eye—glory be, what a cat's-eye! Flaming like a jewel planet in the dusk of the booth! This mattered. The world had lacked cat's-eyes of such water, for Riley Dillon.

He had wandered idly about the place. Perfectly groomed, his lean, slender figure drew the eye, with its subtle air of distinction. Dillon might have been a broker, a corporation executive, a studious counselor retained by big business. So he was usually regarded, even at the hotel where he was so well known and liked. He was none of these things. He was a rascal, ruled by his passion for precious stones. He was a thief, not for gain of lucre, but for gain of jewels; he could not resist them.

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None suspected it. None suspected the magic of his deft, slim, delicate fingers, the astounding knowledge of jewels packed away in his swift, alert brain.

He had been somewhat bored when he caught sight of the booth, in a corner of the glamorous room.

"*Seek Fortune Here,*" read the sign. Why not? He was always seeking fortune; it was fortune brought to bay that had yielded him most of his marvelous collection of gems. And as he paused at the booth, his brain was jogged—by intuition, sixth sense, hunch. Instantly, he was bored no longer, but alert. A Negro boy in Oriental garb stood at the hangings, and drew them apart.

Dillon, whose shirtfront was crossed by the black ribbon of a monocle, passed through. He was enclosed with the seeress.

His glance drifted past the draperies, studded with moon and stars and other supposedly occult tokens, to rest upon the veiled woman. She sat at the other side of a small table. The veil, he guessed, was transparent to her, although not to him. None the less, a woman with those slender, lovely arms and shapely hands, with that lithe, poised figure in its bizarre costume, must have features in keeping. And her voice, breaking upon his scrutiny, was further guarantee of loveliness behind the veil.

"You wish to know all?" she demanded liltingly.

The voice had a trace of accent, an affected rhythm hard to place; but it had decision and purpose. No amateur, but a professional; engaged for the occasion.

"Faith, I'd like to know more than I see," said Riley Dillon pleasantly.

"When you know what I see, you shall know all. The fee is five dollars."

Dillon handed over a banknote. She put it into an ebony box, and his eyes sighted the ring on her finger. He was dazed. The stone shimmered with life in the dim light. Pure deep green, none of the yellow or brown tints of cheap chrysoberyls. Clear green, luminous, mystic, of purest hue, of that chatoyance or moony lustre, so like a cat's-eye in the dark.

Dillon forgot the woman, neglected to appraise her slim hand. He had not known there was such a stone in New York. By the satiny smoothness, by the cut, it was an antique. In its curiously-fretted, heavy gold setting, it breathed to him of allure and brought a catch of his breath.

"Your two hands on the table, please." The woman was speaking. "The palms up."

DILLON seated himself and rendered his palms; he could not tear his gaze from the ring, nor conquer the temptation to fitful glances. The usual patter entered his ears and he heard it not. Her voice went on and on. Suddenly she interrupted herself and brushed his hands aside.

"You're interested in my ring?"

"A needless thing to you," he answered.

"And why so?" she queried sharply.

"A charm against the evil eye?" Dillon's quick, whimsical laugh rang out, his gray eyes warmed. "How can the eye be evil that looks upon you, then?"

"So you know the stone? Name it."

"Chrysoberyl."

She produced pencil and a pad of paper.

"Write the word, and sign your full

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name. I'll give you a reading of your handwriting."

He wrote swiftly:

Chrysoberyl. Harrison Smith.

"Faith, I should write you a poem!" he exclaimed. "One minute, now, till I think of the rhyme—"

"Enough." She caught back the pad. "Not your own signature, eh? You trifle with the present, but you cannot trifle with the future. Come! Your horoscope next. Give me the date and hour of your birth."

She ignored all gallantry, yet her rigamarole was amusing.

"A Christmas child, at two in the morning," said Dillon. It was not the truth. Something warned him. The year he assigned was false.

A man had slipped in and was standing at one side. Dillon was suddenly aware of him, and looked without seeming to look. A slim, quick man, sleekly black-haired, in dark glasses enclosed against all light. Riley Dillon's memories stirred, but could not focus; something unpleasant, shadowy, evasive, like a dream that is fled. Well, it would come in time. He was interested, now.

"You were born under Capricorn, the tenth sign of the zodiac," the woman was saying. "Emperor Menelik of Abyssinia and other noted persons were born under that sign. It is one of the earth signs—"

"With a touch of heaven," put in Dillon blithely. She ignored him.

"Your planet is Neptune; but have no fear. He is the character tester; be yourself and all is well. The beryl is your zodiac stone, September your fortunate month, Saturday your lucky day. Follow your indications, but be guided by this forecast."

She produced a gaily-decorated little brochure.

"In this you'll find the indications for the month. Tomorrow, I see, is a day of great importance to you; the stars are favorable. Something is on the way to you under their influence—a letter, a newspaper, an advertisement, perhaps. Be prepared. Seize upon opportunity. You're about to get a great desire."

Dillon did not accept the finality of her tone. He studied the silent man from the corner of his eye. Something foreign, like her accent; difficult to place.

"My horoscope, is it?" he murmured, and an impulse brought out a common Arabic phrase of politeness. "*Kullema tu'ti huwa tayyib*—whatever you give is good. Thanks, light of the world!"

"What?" Her voice was startled. She knew the words. "You have been in the East?"

"The East Side of New York." And Dillon chuckled. "Well, then, one look at the lovely face before me, and I'll believe in the good fortune you foretell!"

She laughed. For an instant, she swept her veil aside. Dillon met the dark eyes, glimpsed the dark, olivine features. Then he rose and bowed, and with a gay compliment and a word of thanks, took his departure. The man, too, had been dark. Italian? Arab? French? Impossible to say.

He sought the hotel lobby, stood in talk with a house detective and the night manager. There was much bantering and chaffing at his casual inquiries. The fortune teller? She was an Abyssinian or Egyptian dame who had been in the papers lately. A princess she claimed to be; she had worked up at lot of press agent stuff. On the

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level? Huh! A regular racket, wasn't it? Could be played on the level, of course . . .

That was all.

Back at breakfast again, Riley Dillon poured out more coffee, glanced with a grimace at the flamboyant horoscope, frowned thoughtfully. His mind was bridging the years. Arabic was the clue, yet it eluded him.

What a jewel! What a woman, for that matter; but his thoughts ran on the stone. Old, very old. From time immemorial, the cat's-eye had been a fascinating gem; the side toward the light ever dark, the side away from the light, translucent. This was no ordinary Singalese commercial stone. Dillon could sense that it was extraordinary; he had a flair for such things; he felt his pulses tingle at the memory of it.

He wanted this stone himself.

Suddenly he started. The man with the dark glasses? The evil eye—there it was! The evil eye behind those glasses. He had bridged the gap. His memory recalled a street brawl in the Muski quarter of Cairo, the old native section. Natives crowding about a slim dark man; a knife, a blow, a fall, a flight! A rather vague memory, nothing clear-cut, nothing definitely suspicious.

Yes, that was it. Nothing on which to hang suspicion or knowledge. Arabic notions of the evil eye are not what they are usually supposed. The owner may be quite innocent. An admiring glance from that evil eye may cause death or misfortune, without the owner meaning any harm.

"So the lady set the stage to work the old skin game on me, eh?" mused Riley Dillon. "I wonder why? And what will the next move be? And the ring—oh, you beauty! Just let me have a chance at you, and begad, I'll have you!"

He glanced idly at the gay horoscope.

CHAPTER II

A Foot in the Trap

DILLON smiled slightly as he looked over the horoscope—one of batches, assorted according to the signs of the zodiac. Today was Saturday. The month was September. Lucky day in a lucky month, according to the woman's patter. A top-notch day, this! But that was for Riley Dillon to say, after the cards had been turned face up. He tossed the brochure into the wastebasket and turned his attention to the morning paper.

Abyssinia again; war. An ancient empire rich in romance; storied Ethiopia. He turned the page, and the name struck him again. "Abyssinian Princess Helps Open Bazaar." And what a name she had! Kaloola Clefenha Foota Jal. It brought a smile of derision to the lip of Riley Dillon. Accompanied by her husband. Traced her ancestry to King Solomon, through the one-time emperor, Menelik. "A ring set with oriental cat's-eye from the amulet necklace of the Queen of Sheba . . ."

Dillon's lean, somewhat cynical features became a trifle hawklike; his gray eyes, so striking beneath their black brows, hardened. The woman, her lineage, the story of the stone—all a fake, of course. Like a star sapphire, the cat's-eye was a charm against witchcraft and the evil eye, allegedly; therefore was of "amulet" value. A grain of truth in that. No; if he went after this stone, there was no reason to show mercy.

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Historical stones, many of them gems of especial significance, were in his collection. His passion was always for the stone itself, not for its value. This cat's-eye was almost unique in its marvelous color; it was the chrysoberyl of his dreams, finer than any he had already.

He remembered the woman's words, the little game up her sleeve, and with a chuckle turned to the advertising section of the newspaper. Could she really have been so barefaced about it all? Yes. The item in the "Personal" column struck out at him:

> Stranger in New York wishes to meet gentleman interested in Oriental topic and precious stones. Mutual advantage and profit. Address in own writing, CHRYSOBERYL, E 765.

Remarkable! A sardonic but amused smile touched Riley Dillon's lips. What a conjunction of the stars to make this his fortunate day! The ring, old Menelik of Abyssinia as his fellow Capricornian, the warning to expect something of great importance, the reference to advertisements, the princess, the Queen of Sheba's amulet—a portentous coupling of events indeed, but *not* born of the stars!

So Riley Dillon was being steered; they were going to "take" him! Beautiful idea. His interest in the ring had brought in the man to size him up. They worked fast, these two. They figured him idle, indolent, easy-going; probably looked him up with the hotel people. Good! There was his opening.

A shabby, silly game, implying a simple victim. The stone, of course, was the lure; a bunco game of sorts.

"And faith, I'll have to fall for it!" murmured Dillon, as he reached for the telephone. He got the day manager on the line. "Riley Dillon speaking—sure, the top of the morning to you! Can I have the use of a bellhop for an hour or two? Any of the lads will do. But not in uniform. Send him up in street clothes, and thanks to you."

There was Philp, the private detective who worked frequently for him; but this was no job for Philp. He wanted no one, especially that astute detective, to know too much about him. And these bellhops were sharper than any detective, for a simple job like this.

The bellhop arrived—a chipper, quick-eyed young fellow, who, like all the hotel staff, knew and liked Riley Dillon. Dillon sat him down at the writing desk; then frowned. Everything here was Waldorf paper; he did not want that. His eye fell on a novel, the latest detective story, and he jerked out the blank flyleaf.

"Here; take this, me lad, and write a note for me."

"Yes, Mr. Dillon. I ain't so hot on spelling."

"Doesn't matter." But it did, and it mattered tremendously. An obvious hint from Destiny, here. Later, Dillon recalled how carelessly he disregarded it. "Pencil will do. Date it at the top. Then write:

"*'Deeply interested in your Personal ad. in this morning's paper. Would like a café table appointment at your early convenience.'* Let me know when you get it."

The bellhop was slow to get it, but at length succeeded, after much repetition on Dillon's part and facial contortion on his own.

"Go ahead, me lad. Put on the address: *General Delivery, Columbus Circle Station, City.* And sign it, *Joseph Zenophon.*"

Here was a tussle and no mistake.

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Chuckling, Dillon spelled out the name. Even in New York, he decided, this was one name that would not be drawing mail.

"Now for a plain envelope—devil take it, there are none! I don't want the hotel name to show. Why haven't you one in your pocket, me lad?"

The bellhop grinned. "I can get one in the office, Mr. Dillon."

"Of course!" Dillon caught up the pencil and scribbled rapidly: *Chrysoberyl, E 765.* He handed it to the bellhop. "Get a plain envelope—plain, mind you—and copy this on it as address. Put the note you've just written inside, and seal it. Go to the newspaper office, hand in the envelope at the 'E' window in the Want Ads office. Take a taxi; we're a bit rushed. Here's expense money." Dillon handed over a five-dollar bill, then went on:

"Now, listen carefully! You hang around there and spot the man who calls at the 'E' window and gets this note. Use your bean, me lad. I'm laying a bet he'll be a dark man with dark glasses, but I want a good description of him. Then come back and report."

The boy assented and took his departure.

RILEY DILLON glanced at his watch; five to nine. He had acted with his usual prompt decision, and now he could take his time. His mind worked accurately; he knew human nature; he figured that someone would call about ten o'clock for any replies to that advertisement. The reply to Joseph Zenophon ought to be waiting at the Columbus Circle station by four o'clock, say. It would be an evening appointment, no doubt.

Whistling blithely, Riley Dillon set about shaving, bathing and dressing. That cat's-eye, he told himself, was already as good as in his very hand. It was a comforting and gladdening thought.

At ten-forty, Dillon was lighting one of his prime Havanas with his usual deliberation, when a tap came at his door. He did not respond until the cigar was perfectly alight, for nothing destroys the aroma of a cigar like overheating. Then he opened the door. The bellhop entered.

"It was a man in dark glasses, all right. Gray suit, about my height, sort of spry on his feet, a brown face, black shoes, black hat. He answered the note, all right."

"Good work," said Dillon. "How do you know he answered it?"

"I seen him write it, sir. He stopped at the desk where people write ads, and wrote out a reply. Here's the envelope your note was in. He threw it away, and I picked it up after he had gone."

The bellhop proudly extended a pink envelope, ripped open at one end. Dillon eyed it, and saw the words, *Chrysoberyl, E 765* written on the face. He started slightly, a ghastly sense of error coming upon him.

"Hold on, me lad, hold on!" he exclaimed. "You say this is the envelope you put my note in?"

"Sure, Mr. Dillon. I got a pink one on purpose, so I'd make sure of your note being called for."

Dillon swallowed hard. "How do you know he answered this note of mine?"

"He got a bunch of letters, see?" explained the bellhop. "Then he went to the desk and looked at 'em all. He compared this one with a piece of paper he had in his hand. Then he chucked the others away without opening them,

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wrote out a reply, put it in an envelope, and went out."

"Begad if you aren't a smart one, me lad!" said Dillon. He glanced again at the pink envelope, then eyed the bellhop; his expression was quizzical, severe, amused, all at once. "It's a fine forger you'll make, if you don't watch out."

"I don't get you, sir."

Dillon pointed to the envelope. The inked address was in his own handwriting.

"Oh, that!" The other grinned. "Well, sir, you said to copy it. I couldn't copy your writing, and that word Chrys—Chryso—well, whatever it was, I didn't know it; so to make sure I traced it with a piece of carbon paper on the envelope and then went over it with a pen. Wasn't that all right?"

A laugh burst from Riley Dillon as he flipped the pink envelope into the waste-basket. He was not the man to blether over spilled milk.

"It's a jewel you are, me lad. Now, about four this afternoon you take a taxi to that station near Columbus Circle and ask for mail for Joseph Zenophon. Fetch the letter here, and there's a ten-spot in it for you."

The bellhop departed. Riley Dillon, laughing to himself, dropped into a chair, puffed at his cigar, and then sobered.

An obvious trap, carefully avoided—and his foot had gone in. After all, that couple were crafty. That word "chrysoberyl," the envelope compared with the paper left in the booth, the writing the same! Trying to flank the snare, he had gone slap into it, thanks to the clever bellboy. The joke was on him—what of the situation?

That note in the envelope, not in his own writing, would make him out to be wily in their eyes; the address in his own writing would make him out stupid; one of those smart easy-marks who trip themselves up. As they had no doubt figured him the previous night. Well, it was not so bad.

His mind fondled the cat's-eye again. From the Queen of Sheba? Pretty raw, that; still, he had a vague memory of something among his clippings. Budge, the famous Orientalist, had translated the old Ethiopian and Amharic writings. He had something about chrysoberyls in his clippings.

His trunk opened up, Riley Dillon delved into its depths. Monographs, booklets, clippings—everything connected with gems, with locks, with gold and silver craft, with thievery. At last he found what he sought, and ran through the clippings until he came on those he had cut bodily from books of translation.

He frowned over them. Amulets? The Suleiman who was King Solomon? Balkis, the so-called queen of Sheba or Saba? Their son, Ibn al Hakim, carried to Jerusalem to be educated by Solomon, neatly bilking the old man out of gold and gems, and getting away with the loot—a necklace of precious cat's-eyes which preserved him against all witchery, so that he lived to beget the Ethiopian kings? The signet of Balkis, the great seal of Solomon . . .

"Bah!" Riley Dillon tossed the book of clippings aside and went to luncheon. This mass of legend was of no value, and luncheon was of distinct value. He rather believed that his next meal would be shared with an Italian-Egyptian rascal and the charming princess, Kaloola Clefenha Foota Jal of Abyssinia. What a name! He was still chuckling over its absurdity when luncheon arrived.

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But over the ring of the princess, he was exceedingly serious.

CHAPTER III

The Dark Alias

FOUR-THIRTY. The reply was in Dillon's hand, precisely as he had expected:

> The first table on the left of the entrance; Bella Roma Café, 9 this evening. You the guest. CHRYSOBERYL.

Dillon mused upon the note with sombre eyes. The whole thing was a cheap come-on game; the lack of finesse repelled him. He could predict the whole sordid scheme to a T, knew the moves that would be made, and found them bad to the taste.

But that cat's-eye tugged at him with a strange force. A stone whose very existence was unknown to the world of gems—yet no such stone could remain unknown! Riley Dillon was puzzled, curious.

And something more. He knew the Bella Roma quite well. It was a hotel with an unsurpassed cuisine; a quiet place in the late forties, off Sixth Avenue. And yet, all of a sudden, his brain clicked at the written words. Bella Roma, Bellasera — Bellasera! That was the name. He remembered it now, with the details, for suddenly the gap was bridged. Marchese di Bellasera, so-called; adventurer, rascal, thief, blackguard, murderer. The Cairo street, the man with the evil eye, the knife-stroke, the hue and cry, the escape. The newspapers next day had been full of it. The fellow was wanted in a dozen countries. Bellasera!

Riley Dillon dressed with his usual care that evening. His attention to detail was elaborate, as ever, but quite mechanical. Recollection of the man had sobered him a bit; it changed everything. He must be prepared for anything now; the background was ominously bloody. Probably the man had shadowed him about the bazaar, the hotel the preceding night, had learned his name, what little there was to discover about him. Well, so much the better! That stone was now his, at any cost.

Twenty minutes ahead of the appointed time, Dillon walked into the Bella Roma, and nodded to the major-domo.

"Give me a seat anywhere, for the moment. I have friends coming presently; I think they have a table reserved."

Yes. As he passed to the table indicated, he glanced to the left of the entrance. The rendezvous had been well chosen. The table there, with a "Reserved" sign on it, was flanked by the vestibule, and semi-private.

The place was well filled. Dillon settled himself comfortably and ordered a small flask of Chianti while he waited. The string orchestra, pleasantly subdued, was playing airs from "Ernani." The attentive waiter held a light for his cigarette, suggested an evening paper, and presented it with a flourish.

Riley Dillon glanced through it negligently. Then his eye was caught:

> CHARITY BAZAAR HOAXED
> SOCIETY INDIGNANT

A short, laughable story, that drew a gleam to his gray eyes. He carefully tore out the story, trimmed the edges of the clipping, read it over again. Then he pocketed it and leaned back in his chair.

The cat's-eye was definitely his, now.

Yes, he knew exactly what would happen; yet there would be a trick

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somewhere, and no doubt a pistol to boot. They were sharpers, but far from fools. Dillon beckoned his waiter, had a telephone plugged in, and called the Waldorf. If he were right, he would be back there before the night shift came on at eleven. The trap would be quick and fast, the pay-off rapid. Good! He'd be the sucker, and chance his wits against theirs.

"Riley Dillon speaking," he said. "Give me the house detective. Who's on the floor now? McCabe? Good. Put him on, please."

He spoke briefly, and finished his call. When he glanced up, the table to the left of the entrance was occupied.

The man of the dark glasses, sallow, swart, perfectly dressed; the woman, tawny and lovely. Dillon rose, paid his charge, and approached the corner table. The man stood up to receive him and bowed from the hips, heels together. He did the business of gentleman very well.

"Mr. Dillon, I think?" he said, and Dillon affected surprise. "May I present myself: Count Marco Rosati. The lady—I may present you? Mr. Dillon, my dear. My wife, the Princess Clefenha Foota Jal."

Riley Dillon's bow was the acme of grace, of courtliness; a bow in the finest of French tradition, not lifting the lady's hand to his lips like an untrained movie actor, but lowering his lips to brush that hand. A very jewel of a bow, deferential, and of the rarest quality.

"My fortunate day, indeed," he murmured. "I am enchanted."

"So you recognize me?" He faced a ravishing smile, a gesture to be seated, and complied. Count Rosati glanced at his watch, and was devastated.

A thousand pardons; humiliation of the utmost, but a business engagement intervened. Mr. Dillon would, no doubt, replace him? He would rejoin them later, perhaps for cordials; perhaps here, perhaps not. Mr. Dillon expressed himself as charmed, and really was charmed, when Count Rosati departed.

It is always pleasant to find that one's predictions are coming true.

SO Dillon was alone with the lady. Slightly dusky skin, warm and tropical, like mellowed ivory that had known Sheba's caravan trail; massed black hair under a silver net; lustrous eyes, small wickedly lovely mouth, a chin cruelly wilful, exquisite arms and shoulders and figure. And on her finger, the cat's-eye.

Dillon was sardonically amused, was tempted to cry, "Well played!" For she did play it well, all of it. Her story startled him slightly, in view of that clipping he had read over.

She told him, during dinner, that Rosati's father had been an officer in the Italian army, captured at Adowa when King Menelik destroyed the invading army of Italy, in 1896. He had remained in Abyssinia, had gone into business there, had married. He had obtained the cat's-eye ring—how, she did not say. It was a gift to her when she married Count Rosati.

She and her husband had now left Abyssinia, had come to America, and because of the war, were about broke. She was frank, charmingly frank, about it. All this came out at intervals as the dinner progressed. She was able to earn precarious support by telling fortunes.

"And I must sell the stone," she said, with a shrug. "Shall I confess it? I noted your interest last night. I have been trying for some time to

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find a buyer. One cannot go to a dealer and get any price. When you answered the advertisement today, I knew you were interested. It was your handwriting on the envelope, matching your writing of last night. It was not hard to learn your name. You see, I am frank. People who are desperate must be frank."

Dillon assented gravely. "But I know so little of such things!" he murmured.

"This is no ordinary stone," she said, leaning forward eagerly. "It was stolen from Menelik's treasure. It had descended directly from his ancestor, the son of King Solomon and Sheba. I have a paper guaranteeing this, under Menelik's seal."

Dillon's black brows lifted slightly. So this was it!

"The paper is here?"

"No. At our apartment. Come with me, see it for yourself! It is hard for my husband to consent to this sale. He has agreed, but may change his mind. You would give a thousand dollars for the stone, no?"

Riley Dillon met her intent, inviting gaze. A thousand dollars? Not a fifth of the value of the thing. Cheap crysoberyls are cheap; a superb one like this could command any price.

She slipped off the ring, pressed it into his hand. With an effort, he tried to conceal his heart-leap; he could not. He examined the stone, the ring itself; his delicate finger-tips scouted the massy gold, and suddenly he thrilled anew. He had seen such rings before this. He had made one or two, from curiosity.

"Yes," he said. With real regret he handed back the jewel. "If the guarantee is as you say, it's a bargain."

When they left the Bella Roma together, Dillon stole a glance at his watch, and his lips twitched. Exact—almost to the moment! Precisely as he had figured.

CHAPTER IV

Gold and Brass

THAT ride in the taxicab was something of a nightmare to Riley Dillon, knowing all that he knew.

He was no longer tempted to cry, "Well played!" The princess plied her arts rather crudely, now that she was depending on herself and not on the clever instigations of the man with the dark glasses. Except for that scintillating cat's-eye, Riley Dillon would have been bored, but he endured patiently for the sake of the jewel. And a little curiosity lingered. He could guess there was something new coming, somewhere, some novel twist to the old racket. This interested him. With such a prize in view, he could well afford patience.

The taxi halted. Dillon helped her forth; she stumbled, yielded to his arms, laughed a little. They took an elevator to the third floor. The apartment door was directly opposite the elevator. As Dillon entered, he caught the casual, deft movement of her fingers by which she slipped the catch and left the latch free. What a simpleton they must take him to be! Probably, he thought, the man had been somewhere out of sight in the vestibule below, when they entered.

Yes, Riley Dillon was unfeignedly bored by this section of the program. He yielded politely, calmly; took the seat on the divan indicated, refused the proffered drink from the bottle and glasses on the nearby table, looked up with some interest as the princess pro-

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duced the guarantee—a bit of vellum, heavily inked with writing, and a large golden seal.

"Here is the pedigree of the stone, the guarantee, whatever you like," she said, settling down beside Dillon. "You cannot read the Ethiopian language, Mr. Dillon? Then let me translate—or wait! Here is a translation attached to it."

True. An attached paper, certifying that the stone was from the days of King Solomon, that it had descended in the direct line of Ethiopian kings for two thousand years. Riley Dillon languidly glanced over the English writing, glanced at the vellum document with more interest, glanced at the seal, and nodded.

"Yes, yes," he said, with an air of deep satisfaction. "Most interesting, really!"

"Then you will buy the ring!" She turned to him gratefully, impulsively. There was a slight sound at the door, almost imperceptible. Suddenly she leaped from the sofa and tore at her own hair. A cry came from her lips.

The door was flung open. Count Rosati stood there, and behind him, peering over his shoulder, the elevator boy.

"Oh! He attacked me, Marco—you saw?" screamed the woman. Her hair had become disheveled and loosened. She was hysterical, all in an instant. "I was afraid of him—he was brutal—"

Riley Dillon yawned. But his gray eyes were alert.

Count Rosati dismissed the elevator boy with a gesture, came in, closed the door, and ordered his wife to be silent. His eyes were fastened on Riley Dillon. The dark glasses were gone, now. Protuberant eyes, large and staring; something queer about them. Dillon was carried back again to that day in the streets of Cairo, and the yelling, cursing Arabs. The left eye was too fixed in focus; it was a dead eye, evil, fishy. Yet large and staring like the other, diabolical in its huge iris, greenish iris in a swart face. Eyes not to be forgotten, and the left eye false, made of glass.

"So," observed Count Rosati with deadly, intent deliberation, one hand in coat pocket. "I return unexpectedly, I find you in the very act of insulting my wife, the princess! I demand satisfaction—I shall have it, by God! or I'll kill you!"

Riley Dillon lifted his hand to his mouth, yawned again, languidly.

"By all means," he rejoined, rather wearily. "Your wife, the princess . . . Otherwise Jeanne Dupont, adventuress, Martinique Creole, sometime cook in a Park Avenue family. I refer you to the evening papers, which you may not have seen. And this document—tut, tut! Unworthy of you, sir."

"The Ethiopian," he went on, as the woman shrank, and the protuberant eyes gripped him staringly, "is a strange language, identical with ancient Armenian, sprung from the same root. This alleged document is written in Arabic, and appears to be the first *sura* or chapter of the Koran. The seal is pretty, being the seal of the scribe in Cairo who wrote it. By all means, bring in the police."

THERE was a little silence. The woman was frozen. But not the man. A short laugh broke from him. With sudden shift, he caught at the situation and whipped it about to serve him.

"So?" He gestured, as though sweeping everything aside. "Very well. Mr. Dillon, of the Waldorf,

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caught in the arms of a Martinique adventuress! This lady, I assure you, is my wife. So much the greater scandal all around when the story breaks in the morning papers. I feared your knowledge of Arabic; however, let it pass. You perceive, there is still a settlement in prospect?"

Right. Dillon felt a slight admiration for the rapid shift of front, the seizure of the exact phase of things that would be worth while. Decidedly, this man was no fool. The eyes gripped him; one alive and glittering, one dead, stony; both large and staring.

Yes, it would be a nasty mess in the newspapers; and they were prying chaps, these reporters. For reasons of his own Riley Dillon was not minded to have them on his trail. Not that it would come to such lengths, of course. With a word he could settle matters—*but that cat's-eye must be his.* And he was still curious to find the novel twist that this clever rascal would certainly employ. He glanced covertly at his wrist watch, and smiled again. Exactly as he had foreseen.

"I fear—well, just what sort of settlement do you propose?" he asked, with assumed hesitation. "Blackmail, I presume?"

"No!" snapped Count Rosati. "If such is your thought, sir, you are wrong. No gentleman would stoop to such a thing."

"Faith, I agree with you," Dillon said pleasantly. "What, then?"

"You want the ring. You shall have it. You shall pay double the price for it—which, after all, will still be a cheap price. Two thousand dollars."

As he spoke, the man reached out his hand, and the "princess" gave him the ring.

Dillon shrugged. "Well, it might be worse. But I don't carry such sums of money around with me. Nor check books."

"Understood. We'll go, say, to the Waldorf. You don't leave my sight until this is settled." The count moved his pocketed hand significantly. "I'll go to your room with you. Write a check. If the hotel cashier okays it, the incident is closed."

"Agreed," Dillon assented.

"And remember—I have a witness to this scene!" snapped the count menacingly. Riley Dillon only shrugged again.

A short ride; ten minutes later, they entered the Waldorf together, passed up the long flight of steps, went down the lobby and procured Dillon's key at the desk. As they turned to the elevators, Riley Dillon caught the eye of McCabe, the house man. It was not quite ten-thirty. McCabe would be on duty for half an hour or more. All was well, reflected Dillon cheerfully. He had expected to walk in at ten-thirty. Well figured!

But, as they walked into his own room, Riley Dillon was alert, on his toes. The critical moment approached. Here was the unknown—the anticipated novelty. His interest was aroused, his curiosity keen.

"You'll have no objection, I presume," he said casually, "to letting me inspect that ring?"

"Not in the least," and Count Rosati sneered as he extended the jewel. "Perhaps you fear lest I switch rings or something of the sort? Bah!"

Dillon examined the ring again, and made certain of what he had before merely suspected. The stone was solidly embedded in the gold, which covered over its flat under surface; with such a stone, that did not depend on reflection and reflected lights from below for its splendor, a stone that

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had no facets but was smoothly cut, this could well be.

He handed back the ring and seated himself at the writing desk. He drew out a check book, dipped a pen, and glanced up.

"What name?"

"Marco Rosati," said the other, who was standing looking at one of the engravings on the wall, his back to Dillon.

Riley Dillon smiled slightly. Was it to be so crude, after all? He filled out the check with some care. Count Rosati came to the center table and laid the ring there, negligently.

Dillon tore out the check, blotted it, drew open the desk drawer again and put back the check book. In the drawer, his fingers moved swiftly, deftly; they slipped into the brass knuckles lying there.

Then he rose, holding the check in his other hand, and came to where the count stood by the table. Riley Dillon's eyes flickered for an instant to the ring. Well for him that a look, a glance, could tell him what he wanted to know.

"Your check," he said, and suddenly his voice was harsh, biting. "I tell you, I don't like this! After all, it is blackmail. I'm tempted to chastise you."

Rosati laughed sneeringly. He took the check, looked at it, and his smile died. His gaze lifted, anger in his face—

At this instant, Dillon struck.

CHAPTER V

The Eye of Sheba

A QUICK, shrewd blow, and another. The left to the belt, bringing forward the head of Rosati—slap forward into the advancing right. The knuckles caught him smash at the angle of the jaw. Well-planned, well-timed, well-executed. What Riley Dillon lacked in brute force he made up in whiplike speed. Where he would not risk breaking those slim, delicate hands of his, the brass knuckles served well.

Rosati's head was rocked around by that blow. He was slammed into the wall. He fell, sprawled out on the carpet, and lay on his back, unconscious for the moment.

Dillon turned to the table, snatched at the ring, and made certain. He felt for the hidden spring; it could be only in two or three places. His deft fingers located it. The imitation stone, switched for the true one, moved and came out. A poor, flawed, worthless stone with the correct shape and size and cut. But the other?

Falling on his knees, Dillon searched. Rapidly, vainly. Pistol in pocket, but little else. It was incredible; to his dismay, there was no stone, no hiding place. Such a thing could not be hidden from him, yet here was utter failure. Rosati had switched the stone in an instant, while he stood looking at the picture on the wall. Hands, pockets, clothes, hair—

In consternation, Dillon drew back. He was caught. He had failed. Not caught; he was prepared against the trap, but he was not prepared for failure. He wanted the cat's-eye, and he had lost it.

Suddenly he started, made a movement of repulsion. As the man lay there senseless, his left eye showed partly open lid, empty red socket; the shock of the blow, the fall, had emptied the socket. There on the carpet, half hidden under his shoulder, was the imitation eye.

Dillon reached for it, picked it up.

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The unexpected weight astonished him. He turned it over—and a whistle came from him.

"Glory be! I thought there'd be something different from this chap—"

Rosati had passed his hand to his eye. A deft movement, hand to eye again; all done in an instant, as Riley Dillon could well comprehend. That was why Count Rosati had turned his back.

Here behind the false eye, in the cavity, fitting snugly and perfectly, the real stone in tiny clips. Undoubtedly the false eye would slip again into place; evidently there was a reason that Rosati's false eye was large, protuberant. Yes, a clever game. Probably one the pair had worked repeatedly. But they would never work it again. The real stone was gone now. It was in Riley Dillon's pocket. The false stone was slipped into the ring. The spring caught, it was held there. And the eye?

Dillon leaned forward. This was something new to him; for once, his fingers were awkward, yet attained their goal. The glass eye was slipped into place, fitted into the socket, the lid slid over it nicely. The prostrate man stirred a little.

"All right, McCabe! Come on in," Riley Dillon called.

The door opened and the house detective walked in, and stood waiting.

Count Rosati stirred, came to one knee. Riley Dillon took his arm and lifted him to his feet, helped him get his bearings, with hearty apologies and a warm, lilting laugh.

"Sorry, upon my word! I lost my temper for a moment—"

Rosati burst out in furious speech, then checked himself at sight of the grimly watching McCabe. Dillon thrust the ring at him, and the man pocketed it. Then he took the check, looked at it again, shot out an oath.

"What d'you mean by it, eh? You know perfectly well—"

Riley Dillon chuckled.

"Yes, my dear fellow. You may take back the ring; I've no use for it, really. It would be an unpleasant reminder to me of an awkward scene. And the check is for two dollars, to pay for taxicab fare and an excellent dinner. You see, Rosati, I don't buy jewels. I've no interest in buying such things, I assure you!"

Rosati quivered with rage. "Then when the story comes out—"

At a sign from Dillon, the grim McCabe stepped forward.

"It won't come out, mister," he announced threateningly.

"Eh?" Rosati whirled on him. "Who the devil are you? What d'you want?"

"You, if you make a fuss." McCabe showed his badge. "Bellasera—ain't that the name? I knew this gent the minute I laid eyes on him, Mr. Dillon. Want him turned over to the cops? I got an idea he's got a record."

Dillon eyed the unhappy, paralyzed gentleman quizzically.

"Yes? Or no? How about it, me lad? Or should I call you the Marchess di Bellasera?"

Rosati stared at them, speechless, his face becoming a dirty gray. Somehow, his eyes were in ill accord; they looked a little odd, as though the glass eye shot off at a stubborn angle. Dillon wondered whether he had put it in upside down, perhaps.

Then Rosati was gone—gone without a word, clutching the check, clutching the ring in his pocket, clutching the eye with heavy eyelid. Accepting defeat, but little dreaming of the loss to accept as well.

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Riley Dillon, chuckling, moved over to the writing desk. He took up the jeweler's glass there, screwed it into his eye, examined the real cat's-eye curiously. On the flat, unpolished base were tiny marks, scratches. No! Letters in the old, almost unknown Ethiopian language, spoken only by priests. What were they? The names of Sulaiman, perhaps, Balkis of Sheba . . .

"I say, Mr. Dillon!"

Dillon swung around. "Oh, McCabe! I forgot about you. Thanks, me lad; you served the turn beautifully."

"But what did it mean, sir? You've got me curious."

"Eh?"

"Why, that name Bellasera. You said it meant something—"

Dillon's warm, quick laugh rang on the room, as he handed McCabe the proper recompense for his services.

"Oh, that! And so it does, me lad, so it does. Most appropriate for our departed friend, under the circumstances. It means—good night!"

And as McCabe exited, grinning, Riley Dillon looked down at the quivering, glowing Eye of Sheba in his hand.

On and Off the Blotter

A MAN lay down on the tracks at the Fourth Avenue railroad station in Pittsburgh and parked his head on a rail. "I'm going to commit suicide," he announced to bystanders.

The station agent regarded him callously. "You'll have to wait," said the agent, "because the next train won't be along for half an hour."

The man got up and went away, muttering in disgust.

ACCIDENTS while answering false alarms have taken the lives of four New York City firemen in the past year. That's twice the number killed at fires. Jail sentences now are being imposed for ringing false alarms. John Gorlick served ten days on that account. The day after his release he sounded a false alarm from the same box as before!

A KIDNAPER muffed his lines and so failed in an attempt to snatch Miss Mary Mason, daughter of Walt Mason, the poet. A man telephoned the Mason home in La Jolla, a suburb of Los Angeles. He said a woman friend of the family had become ill downtown and wanted Miss Mason to go and take her home. Miss Mason tried to hold him on the wire while the call was being traced, but he apparently became suspicious and hung up. She happened to know that the woman friend he mentioned was out of town.

TWO-WAY radiophone communication is being installed in Boston police cars. Messages are transmitted through the standard type desk telephone. An ultra short wave is used.

—*Emory Black.*

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Goose Chase

Jim stops paddling

Clues? Poof! Extradition? Bah! When Detectives Freckle-Pan and Still-Jim Get a Hunch They'll Follow a Killer to Hell or a Goose Pond

By

Earl W. Scott

THE heist happened on Tuesday at noon. The Oriental, a ritzy antique shop at Third and Broad, was running a sale featuring a fortune in gems from the Far East as tops. Hot stuff, on first thought, but with wealthy takers spotted, the easiest in the world to pass, and this Ice Broody was anything but dumb.

Sure the store had a spotter. A two hundred pound ex-pug, lookin' foolish in silk kimono and skull cap. But with the store empty for the moment except for Sammy Lee Fong, its proprietor, the pug drops into the rest room for some drags on a fag and right here Ice Broody pulls his stuff.

Sporting a swell front, pressed pants, buttonhole gardenia and all, he drifts in, calls for the gem tray, socks the Chink between the eyes with brass knucks and fades down the alley before the alarm blows.

It was hands down for Broody,

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sparklers and all, if he'd let it rest at that. But he has a clothes change parked down the alley and five minutes later sees him strolling past the scene, sporting a polo coat, checked cap and horn-rim cheaters. Maybe Broody thought he was establishing an alibi or something, but it's the best guess he was just pulling a razzberry.

The joker was O'Toole, the beat bull. He had spotted Broody leaving the joint, and just when Ice was pulling his deepest chuckle over the milling mob at Fong's door, O'Toole steps up for the pinch.

"Your mitts, Broody, and make it snappy!" growls O'Toole, grabbing his collar and fishing for the cuffs.

Broody doesn't even act surprised. "Sure," he laughs, shoving out his dukes. Trouble was, his right never stopped traveling and ended up with a sweet sock that folded O'Toole up. He goes for his gat, but Broody's is already out, barking lead. O'Toole takes the gutter—Broody a cruising taxi, and that was that.

IT'S about half an hour later that my team mate Still-Jim Sills and I get a sketchy outline of the affair from a clerk down at Segram's Sport Shop.

We're stocking up on shells, gun grease and collapsible decoys when the news breaks.

"Hell, Freckle-Pan," said Still-Jim, "maybe we'd better skip this huntin' trip for the present and shag back to h. q. The skipper—"

"—has six other dicks," I offers, "to sic on this red-hot, whoever he is. We been planning this duck shoot for months. Pick up those shells and we'll get traveling before he noses us out." I turns on the clerk, feeling kinda sneakin' underneath. I could hear Still-Jim mumbling under his breath as he picked up the cartridge vest he'd just bought.

"Damn—a cop-killer!" he grunts. "Wonder who—"

"Stow that," I grits. "We don't even know O'Toole was sapped. Probably got a nasty one, but you can't kill an Irishman."

"You'd ought to know, you mick," he grins back, kinda sick-like.

I says something about the season opening tomorrow and one day's shoot about all that amounted to anything in these parts, when a sound jerks us round.

"Quack—quack—quack—"

At first Jim and me thought it was somebody giving us the bird. Dicks are sensitive that way. Then we sees a bunch of guys in cords and lace boots huddling round a little whickus that stands on the counter in the back end of the store.

A clerk was explaining: "Just a little trick to get around the Federal ruling on using live decoys, men. Merely a miniature gramophone that plays cylinder records," he smirks, "just like gran'ma used to have." He's shut off the lever and's cranking fast as he talks.

The do-dad isn't much bigger than a cigar box with a rotating wax record ridin' the top, shaped like a water glass. There's a hinged cover sporting a handle.

The clerk raises a skinny hand. "Men, listen. It's going to mean something to have this machine along when the birds start coming in over the blinds in the morning. Just the difference between a full bag and getting skunked. We have here the actual recorded feeding and mate call of live ducks. With a spread of dummy decoys it'll drag the birds down out of

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the air. Neat, eh? Sells for six dollars."

With a whirring click, the call of a hen mallard filled the room. It was absolutely lifelike.

I nudged Still-Jim at my elbow. "Let's get outa here," I growled. "Don't that prove something? You can't legislate human nature. With the government trying to give the birds a break, some shyster figures this one out."

We're at the door when the clerk calls, "Any you men Parvis or Sills? Police headquarters is calling."

We swung round slow.

"Damn!" I gritted. "What'd I tell you, Jim? I knew if we stuck round here long enough Muggins'd find us."

I laid down my packages and tromped back to the phone.

"The chief, all right," I glooms, rejoining Jim at the door. "The Oriental job."

"So the Loon Lake trip's off?"

"What do you think?" I says, and just as I stepped into our car I got a flash of the headline from the tail of an eye:

UNKNOWN MAN SLAYS O'TOOLE

"Hell," I offers. "Tim was a great guy, too."

Jim didn't say anything. Just sat there, hunchin' thin shoulders against the cold wind. We're thinking about Tim's wife and three kids.

II

AT h.q. we found Muggins doing a marathon round the office. He throws down back of his desk and gives us the double-o.

"Parvis," he says, glaring. "It's maybe up to you and Still-Jim here to stick a collar on this Ice Broody."

Jim and I swap glances.

"Broody," I says. "So *he* pulled the job—killed O'Toole and—"

Muggins shakes his head grimly. "He just thought he did. Tim's still alive at the San, thank God, but that ain't Ice's fault. The news hawks got that wrong. It's once they gave us a break. We're letting it ride that way. It's our ace in the hole. Broody'll think he's sitting pretty with no one to stick the finger on him."

"Then Tim must have talked?"

Muggins nodded, grinding butts in an ash tray. "Plenty." He fills in the details. "Sorry about that hunting trip," he continues, "but we've got to peg this rat. The net's out. Highways, stations, airport's covered. But you know what I think?" He swings round on us, poking a stubby forefinger. "Broody's stickin' right here, hunchin' Tim was the only guy that spotted him—and he's damn well right!"

"How about Lee Fong down at the Oriental?" I asks.

Muggins spread his hands. "Fong's dead! He was an old man and Broody socked him too hard."

We sucks in breath at that.

"Now," Muggins sinks a fist in the desk top. "Freckle-Pan, you and Still-Jim start fanning this burg, and don't stop till you've learned something." He waved toward the door.

"Any suggestions?" I falters.

His answer was a bellow. It was easy to see the chief was pretty much worked up. "Suggestions! You're dicks, aren't you? Been on the city pay roll twenty years—!" He choked over the cigar he'd just lit. "Only thing I can think of—this Broody's quite a sport. Lives up at the Spaulding House along with that big stooge of his, Rod Fenton. Though Rod's been playing safe since getting out of stir last month and chances are ain't

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no part of the Oriental job. This Broody is another goose hunter same as you birds—if this tells you anything, you're welcome to it."

He creaks down in his chair, pawing at the papers on his desk. We passed up the grin of the desk serg', and gets out to the old crate.

"That was a dirty crack about goose hunters," glooms Jim, fishing for a pill.

"Yeah," I answers. "Too bad that sporting goods clerk couldn't have been in a dark corner somewhere to give him the bird with gran'ma's loud speaker."

Just the same, Jim's remark kinda' set me thinkin'. I kicked at the starter and backed around.

"Where to?" shivers Jim. "Maybe some of the uncle joints on River Street—?"

I shook my head. "Broody's too smart for that. His fence for the Oriental junk is likely some big-wig without a conscience. Some playboy. We'll start with his apartment."

The Spaulding's a neat brick pile out on Countryside, a stag dump where some pretty wealthy sports gets their mail. We got up on third without spotting any of the lads from h.q., but that didn't mean the chief was slighting the dump.

Pretty swell, we found it. Orientals on the floor, overstuffed furniture, plate glass door backs and highboy radio. We tromped through into the bedroom and bath.

"Hi," says Jim, jerking open a closet door. "The chief wasn't so far wrong about that huntin' stuff, at that. Looka here."

I'd just fished a cigar from a humidor on the dresser and padded over. The place was a combination closet and dressing room. There were plenty of togs on the hangers. Tails, tux', knickers and sweaters, even a sack of golf clubs on a hook, but the thing that took our eye was a bunch of hunting duffle spread out on a table and two chairs. Everything from hip boots, wool socks and cord britches to shells and cased gun.

A heavy duck coat was tossed over a second chair.

My eyes narrowed on the layout. "Huh," I puffs. "Maybe this tells us something."

"Yeah?" Jim eyes me in the act of slipping the double barrel out of its case.

"Broody was going huntin' tomorrow, all right," I says, "probably this stickup may alter his plans."

I LEFT the detail work to Jim and went back, parking in the Morris by the table. I think better that way. Years of pounding the bricks haven't helped my feet any. I ain't the peppery young cop I used to be when I was champ jujutsu grappler of the force, a freckled Irish mick with a lot of sap. What the years stick into a man's head they steal from his heels.

I leans back, sighing and thinkin' hard. My eyes swept the walls. Sporting pictures everywhere, snaps and enlargements. Most of 'em showed Broody himself workin' his dogs or holding up bagged game. He had a deceptive map, that guy. He'd been mugged at h.q. He was bald, had a fat, moonish face with a crooked grin. Seemed easy-going, but was sly as a coyote and as canny.

A radiator started clanking monotonously. It suggested the cold outside. Jim kept up his rustling round in the closet. I wondered, frowning, what the devil he'd found to interest him so long.

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Bum hunch, probably, coming to the apartment. Even a dumb guy wouldn't tempt fate blowing back after a killing. I reached across to grind out cigar butts in the table ash tray and spotted a timetable.

It was half-buried under the fold of yesterday's Times. I fished it out idly, disclosing the schedule for trains out of Center City. Faint penciled checking marked the departure of the three-thirty. The column was in light print, indicating A.M.

I grunted. It was a new train, the *Hunter's Special,* leaving the Union Station the following morning, the twenty-first.

Broody had intended taking that train. But it was a hundred-to-one bet wild horses couldn't drag him to that Union Station now. I tossed the folder aside and threw myself up to my feet.

A rasping squawk ripped out through the stillness from the closet. I wheeled, hand flashing for my gat, then cursed under my breath, relaxing as the duck calls continued.

Striding across, I yanked back the closet door. Jim was crouching beside the chair, the hunting coat tossed aside. Before him on the chair seat whirred one of those duck call dinguses. He grinned sheepishly.

"Just thought I'd try the thing," he began, then I pounced down, locking the rotating cylinder.

"You dumb cluck," I gritted. "Why tell the world we're here? Hearin' that from the hall, Broody'd be *sure* and come in. Yeah, just like Selassie marched on Rome."

Jim straightened, his lantern-jawed mug so doleful I couldn't help grinnin'.

We hadn't said much about it, but losin' out on that duck hunt had hit us pretty hard. Seemed like things kept intruding all the time to remind us of it, too.

I barged back into room center, visions of Loon Lake with its reed-filled bayous and choice marsh rising. It centered a lonely stretch of boggy land, surrounded by woods, some hundred miles to the north—a wild spot, Jim's and my favorite stalking ground.

I passed by the table, staring down. The trail folder lay spread there. Suddenly I seized it up; ran a finger down the columns.

That finger paused on the Loon Lake Station. The name was checked. I straightened grimly.

"Jim," I called softly. "How'd you like to go huntin' after all in the morning?"

He slouched across, eyeing me sourly. "Say, are you nuts, or something?"

I nodded. "Probably so. Ever hear that old saying, 'It takes a thief—'"

"'—to catch a thief,'" he finished. "So what?"

"I'm layin' my dough that the same red comes up for gander-getters."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning we're headed downstairs right now and you're watching this dump from across the street while I go places."

"Yeah?" Jim didn't say much more than that. Just followed me into the hall, closing the door. He was used to my way of doing things.

IT was maybe three P.M. when I left Jim, and after six of a cold, blustery evening when I got back.

"Hi," he growls, limping out of the dark as I rolled up to the curb. "I've tromped a furrow round this corner—"

"And no sign of Broody?" I offers, grinning. "Didn't figure he'd come back in the daylight, but I wanted to

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make sure. Drop over to Louie's and get some ham-and. I'll meet you here in half an hour."

He grunted, slouching away. Nursing the package bulging my side pocket, I made across the street toward the Spaulding and back up to Broody's apartment.

I was playing a hunch and playing it strong. It had sent me scouting for three hours, covering the second hand dumps from the Front Street Bridge to the depot. Goose chase was right, and I squirmed to think of the chief's reactions if he'd wised up to my hunch. Fact is, it was that very thing that determined me to keep Jim's skirts clear. If my proposed grand slam was a flop, then I'd shoulder all blame and take the horse laugh. If it jelled, old Still-Jim might share the glory.

There was a side door to the Spaulding, as well as a servant's entrance in the rear. Jim got back round seven-ten and we took up a monotonous beat, covering the exits, which wasn't helped much by the growing drizzle.

He'd quizzed me a couple of times over that crack I'd made about maybe going duck shooting, but I'd stayed mum, saying it all depended on the set-up, which was more than true.

Midnight drew down and I was getting pretty anxious about the affair. Maybe I'd spun air castles. Maybe while we'd been cooling our heels around the Spaulding, Ice had pulled a fancy flit, more convinced than ever cops were dumb palukas with bone for brains.

Then I spots Rod Fenton! He was climbing into a cab at the side entrance, and I made him when the doorman sprang his flash at the loading stand. Rod bawls hell out of the domo for the attention. The drizzle had developed into a low, wet fog and visibility was tough, probably why I'd missed him coming out. Too, there'd been considerable coming and going of guests after the shows and late trains.

Still-Jim and I had hoped Broody might show up, but his sidekick was the next best thing, and I raced across the sidewalk, flagging down the nearest cab.

"Tail that cab!" I yells, hopping in. "L-23479—police business!"

We swooped out from the curb but crashed cross-traffic one block down, and I sat saying bad words while Rod's cab slid away into the dark, turning a near corner.

We were after it, sure; but the wait was costly, and twenty minutes of cruising saw me back at the Spaulding, empty-handed. It was just such a set-up as I'd figured, and paging Jim, we got up to the apartment.

I made straight for the closet, yanking open the door. Jim was at my elbow.

"What the hell—" he begins, then pauses, jaw dropping. "Gone!" he says. "The huntin' junk—that's what Rod must have been after."

"Right," I says, swinging round.

"Lousy break," says Jim, fishing for a pill. "If you could have stuck on Rod's tail he might have led you to Broody."

"Maybe—maybe not," I answers, "but this settles it. We go duck hunting in the morning."

"Say—" began Jim, then pauses, eyeing me under bushy brows. "I get it," he continues. "You're guessing Rod was snagging Broody's duffle out for him. Broody's going after ducks himself—so we go." He shakes his head, sad-like. "It'll be a lead pipe cinch coverin' a hundred miles of north country. There can't be over forty or fifty lakes at the most. We can do

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it in an hour, collar Ice and fetch him back to town for breakfast."

He spits in disgust, tapping his forehead. "Just a little balmy Freckle-Pan. The beginning of the end. . . ."

"Lay off!" I growled. "I'm following a hunch. Pipe that timetable laying there?" I jerked a thumb toward the table. "The *Hunter's Special* is checked, and get this, the Loon Lake Station."

Jim's dubious eyes lifted from the pill he was lighting. He nodded slowly.

"Might be a chance," he offered. "We can buzz Muggins to cover the train—".

"Cover hell!" I says. "Think Broody'd poke a nose round that Union Station with a bunch of dicks on the loose? He could smell 'em a mile."

"Yeah? Well—"

"Listen, Jim," I says, poking a forefinger. "We know the Loon Lake shootin's the best in the district. We're hunters ourselves, see? Broody's a hunter. He knows it, too. Broody's goin' after game—that's why he sends Rod after his gun and stuff. Broody checks Loon Lake on that folder before the Oriental stickup. Sense says he don't brace the town station here, to catch the train; but it's a good guess he'll hunt at that lake. Why not? Ten to one he's already slipped the cycle cops on the highway in this fog. We're goin' to Loon Lake."

I starts for the door. Jim tails along, still quarreling. "Say you're right, Freckle-Pan. Say he goes, there's two miles of shore line. There's cover with hell knows how many hunters parked in blinds ready to blow yer head off—"

We're in the hall. I swung round. "Do *we* catch that three-thirty train or do *I?*" I asks.

"We—we!" he yells. "But I still think you're loony!"

III

THERE'S a wet wind breezin' out of the north. Eastward the black night's turned gray; but fogs still drifted the inlets and bayous of the lake.

Visibility's nil twenty yards away.

Jim's at the paddle and I'm hunched up shiverin' in the canoe bow, teeth chattering in spite of heavy togs and hip boots. The cold steel of my pump gun's biting through my wool mitts. We're easing slowly along the reed's edge, black water sucking and slapping at our prows.

A sudden cloud of mallards rise, crashing out of the bog to the right. Jim drops his paddle and goes for his gun.

"Lay off," I growls under my breath. "Don't be too dumb. You know damn well we can't shoot. Keep movin'."

"Hell's bells," grits Jim. "What kind of a pipe dream is this?" But he resumes paddling again and soon we're slipping past the looming mound of a rat house topping the reed fringe.

A low voice rips out of the gloom.

"You birds want to shoo all the ducks off the lake? For cripe's sake, get parked somewhere!"

"Sure," I half whispers. "We got a blind on the east end."

And we leaves his low cussin' off to the stern. I'm feeling pretty low at that. So far the cards seemed stacked. There'd been no sign of Ice Broody or Fenton, for that matter. Three hours ago Jim and I had hooked the *Special* back in town. Maybe a hundred sports had been riding the train and none of 'em even looked like our meat.

They'd begun droppin' off as soon

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as we hit the branch forty miles north, and Loon Lake, which is near the end of the run, about cleaned up the train. Six of us had crammed into the old crate that services the boat house, and fifteen minutes later had rented our canoe from old Dad Beamer, the caretaker, who's hollerin' hard times and cussing poor business. Us, we're glad. The fewer men on the lake, the easier our job. Still, it was hard to tell how many cars had parked around the shootin' ground.

As for Jim, he'd quit arguing a long time since, but there's a mighty grim look around that lantern jaw of his. I can see he's figurin' our chances are less than rotten and can't say I blame him.

Two goofy dicks a hundred miles out of bounds, wanderin' round a fog-smeared lake, hopin' to pick up a killer on the slim hunch of a railway guide.

Jim stops paddling and lifts a hand.

Somewhere a growing clamor was rising. The backfire honking of a tribe of geese. Flying low from the sound, and suddenly we gets their silhouettes against the lightening east. Quarreling and gabbling like old women, they strung out in a flopping line, with every intention of lighting. I threw up a wrist, noting the luminous dial on my watch reads six-forty.

Then somebody jumped the gun! Starts blazing away on the eastern shore. The livid fire from his pump gun spears streaks in the fog. With wild squawking the birds are up and away.

Almost at the same instant the fog began lifting and with it a cloud of water fowl on all hands. Everybody begins shooting and I can guess how sore those hunters were that the greenhorn hadn't waited for more light. Anyhow, Jim and I could guess about the number of shooters there were parked around, and their approximate location.

It was half an hour before visibility was good and the only birds showing were a few mud-hens nosing around the clearer water beyond the reed's edge.

"Now what?" says Jim, huddling low in his bulky shooting coat and tossin' a red-rimmed glance about the terrain.

"Keep on yer shirt," I growls, "and let's get further back into the tall reeds. The flight'll start coming in pretty soon."

"Yeah, and what about that?" he quarrels, grunting over his paddle. "Hell of a lot of good it's goin' to do us."

I didn't answer and we noses into the deep reeds maybe ten yards off shore along the south bank. There wasn't much doing for a while, then a pair of teal whistles in low over our heads. Firin' bursts out fifty yards to our left and I caught movement in a pit-blind on the shore. One of the birds dropped; the other, zooming high, jerks round. Some lad lets him have it with a sweet angle shot off to the right, pullin' him out of the blue.

Jim's groaning in the prow. "*I* could have taken him like Grant took Richmond . . . Can't we do a little shootin'? Jeeze, in the old days our live decoys would have stuck that pair in our laps."

I'M sittin' tight. Spotting that shooter on our right, I could see his canvas decoys spread out, bobbing just at the marsh edge. His kill was drifting directly toward his rat house blind, masked by a thick patch of six foot reeds, and wisely, he was letting it lay.

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Above everything else, I'm listening till my ear drums ache, hot eyes jerking from point to point, fingers vising the pump gun across my knees. Seven red-heads rocketed in, wings whistling, but they were too high.

Far down the shore some sap started tootin' a dinky call, but they gave him the razzberry.

Then things went quiet again.

Suddenly Jim tensed forward, jerking a thumb. "Holy hell, take a look."

I swung round.

Stringing in over the north inlet drifted a giant V of black dots—mallards! Thick as locusts they broke into a sweet deploy, carefully considering a landing spot. The V's nose broke and the lines bellied out. Suddenly it broke into segments, the right line winging westward, the left rocketing high across the lake, veering round and returning, plunging down, whistling wings set for the water's dead center.

Ignoring the groaning, cussing Jim, I was tensed out over the gunwale—listening, listening.

The hunters had had their lesson. Not a reed rustled. They were holding their fire. Suddenly above the murmur of lapping water and the whine of wind broke the sound of a blaring brass band! Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever!*

The first few strains rang out clearly, to be choked off in a myriad of cussing from that rat house blind on the east.

"Hell's bells!" yelped Jim, half rising. "What—"

"That's it!" I hissed, seizing the second paddle. "Watch your gat, Jim! That's Ice Broody over there! Get going and stick inside the reeds."

Along the east bank burst a roaring barrage as the startled birds zoomed skyward. But we'd forgotten them.

Jaw still sagging, Jim went for his paddle and silent as Indians, we slid forward through the water lanes, making for the blind. Nearing it, we could hear plenty of cussing still going on there. Two men, from the sound.

Then we broke through, guns training the pair.

I saw first Ice Broody's moon face whipping round in blank surprise. He was sprawled on top of the rat house, shotgun loosely gripped, stretching out before him. The head and shoulders of Rod Fenton bulked beyond. Sloshing around in hip length waders, he was in the act of hurling a boxed duck-call machine far into the lake. It dropped from his hands and he went for his gat. Ice, suspicious as hell, was whipping over his gun, when I barks, "Stick 'em high, you birds. You're under arrest!"

The same moment our canoe nosed softly into the mossy side of the rat house and we jumps into the water. It was a tough spot for a collar. My boot soles ground down into the ooze and, lurching forward, I stepped into a hole.

My gun noses up. Then Ice jumped. Jim's gat exploded almost in my ear. Fenton yelled. Then, clawing and kicking, Broody and I sank into the freezing water. I grabbed quick breath as my head went down. My fingers had vised round Ice's fat throat as he drove a knee into my middle. The water weight took out some of the sting but I buckled, gasping, hanging doggedly to my hold.

Muddy water streaming, we churned up, trying for foothold. Round and round that soggy rat house we thrashed, deep mud sucking at our feet, slimy water loosening holds. Ice drove a right to my chin. It missed,

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raking my ear. Dazed, I reeled, fingers slipping from his throat.

Triumph flamed in his eyes as his gat whipped out. It missed fire and cursing, he pistol-whipped at my face. But his feet bogged and, arms spread, he sagged toward me.

My clawing hands closed on Broody's thick neck. Automatically I sank my thumb into the bone sockets there, and with a final desperate effort, used jujutsu.

His fat frame quivered above me in the water and his hold fell free. I hauled him up and started for the shore, dragging him after. I was almost there when, foggily, I recalls Jim.

WHIPPING around, I caught the tableau. Waist deep in water, Fenton stood choking him. Jim's body was limp, his eyes were popping out and his tongue stuck out. Fenton's shoulders bulged as he put on pressure, then swayed back for the final plunge.

Dropping Broody's limp body, I yanks out my shoulder gat and draws down, tugging trigger.

Once my pistol spoke. The second time it misses fire. But the one slug was enough. Fenton lifted high in the water and then pitched, splashing, to his face.

I got Jim to dry land first and was just starting back after the other when more hunters blow up, attracted by the ruckus.

"What the hell?" they asks and I gives 'em the S.O.S., spilling the dirt in the meanwhile.

Jim snaps out of it while we're giving first aid to Broody, but Fenton's got a bad shoulder wound and we has to carry him back up to Dad's shack. Broody stays pretty weak, and we stretches the two of them out in Dad's bedroom, while we take on a few shots of pick-me-ups out round the stove.

A long, lean guy in laced boots, with a twinkle in his eye, says, "Detectives, eh? S'pose you realize Loon Lake's in a neighboring state? What about extradition?"

"Hush," I says. "Not so loud. The down train'll be here in less'n half an hour."

He gunts, gnawin' off a big chew. "I'm a duck hunter myself," he offers. "The D. A. for this district brings in an adverse decision on the use of them machine duck calls last night." He signs off to spit, then jerks a thumb toward the bedroom. "Those palukas were aimin' to take advantage of us local men." He rises, stretching. It's not till then I sees he's wearing a sheriff's badge under his coat.

"Maybe my eyesight's gittin' bad," he continues. "But seems like *I* ain't seen nothin' strange happenin' round here this mornin'. How about you boys?" He turns to the others.

"That's right," they grins, and all make for their guns stacked by the door. Soon they're heading back for the lake.

"Hell," says Jim, sprawled out on the old-fashioned sofa against the wall. "I just thought of somethin'. Them three hours you was out yesterday afternoon. You was fannin' the neighborhood for that damn band record!"

"That's tops in reasoning," I grins. "As luck would have it, I had plenty of time to switch the records at the Spaulding before Rod came after the huntin' junk. Maybe I didn't grow gray diggin' up that 1890 record. Some goose chase!"

"With Ice Broody getting the gander," offers Jim, rubbing at a swollen jaw.

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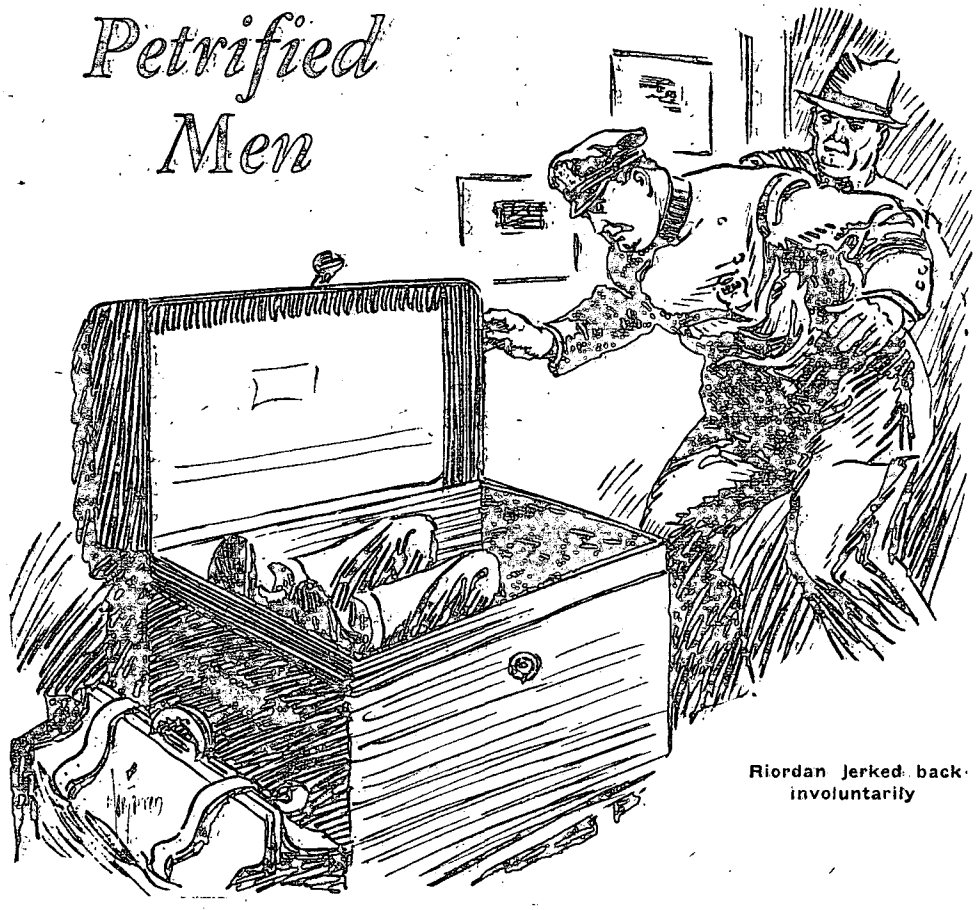
Four Petrified Men



Riordan jerked back involuntarily

A Riordan Novelette

By

Victor Maxwell

Sergeant Riordan Faces Two Fearful Riddles — Murder by Stuffed Animals and a Diabolic Trick That Changes Corpses into Stone

CHAPTER I

The Corpse of Stone

SIX o'clock in the evening is one of the quieter times in the police business, for at that hour most of the world is sitting down to dinner or supper, or preparing for the evening meal. So when the telephone jingled, Detective Sergeant Riordan reached leisurely for the instrument.

"Sarge, this is Joe, at the hotel," came a tense voice over the wire. "Slip over, will you? I'll be waiting at the ladies' entrance. And come quiet; the

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hotel doesn't want the newspapers in on this."

Riordan hung up, and presently slipped his roadster in to the curb at the side of the city's largest hotel. Joe McIntyre, house detective of the Belmont-Grand, was waiting for him under the marquee, and piloted the sergeant to the tenth floor and into Suite 10-G. McIntyre pointed to a trunk resting on a low baggage rack.

"You take a look, Sarge," he said, "then I'll tell you about it."

Riordan glanced at the exterior of the trunk, noting it appeared dusty, and then lifted the lid. He jerked back quickly, then peered in the boxlike receptacle. Lying on its back, with legs drawn up, knees bent, was the fully-dressed form of a man—paunchy, with gray hair, staring eyes and a curious waxy complexion. The sergeant slowly scanned the figure, bent over and touched one of the arms. It was hard, rigid. He drew his fingers over one of the waxy cheeks, and received the impression that he had caressed a marble statue.

The whole figure was so hard, so unyielding, so utterly inhuman, that he was puzzled. The eyelashes were as stiff as bristles; and the gray hair on the figure's head was as hard and immovable as if it had been carved with a fine tool.

"Well, what is it—part of a county fair feature?" Riordan asked.

"Party, name of Mrs. Loretta Sulloway, telegraphs the house to reserve two squares and a splash, that she'll be in this afternoon," said the house detective. "She taxis up about three with two suitcases. Swell-looking dame, tips the taxi man four-bits, though he's only brought her from the depot. Tips bellhop two-bits for showing her the suite. Half an hour later she goes out, stopping at the desk to say her trunk will be delivered from outside. About four this trunk shows, on a Standard Transfer wagon. Porter takes it up to the room. Mrs. Sulloway comes back about half-past five, comes up here—and in five minutes begins to yell like a Comanche. Trunk is open with that in it. We get her to the house infirmary and the doc gives her a shot in the arm to quiet her, and the boss sends for me. I took a look and called you."

"You call Standard Transfer, too?"

"I did that, Sarge. They say Mrs. Sulloway phoned them, told them to go to the Pioneer Storage Warehouse and get a trunk she'd left there. They do. I called the Pioneer, too, and they swear this was the woman's trunk. Left there about four months ago, they say, in dead storage. Been in a corridor all the time. I got 'em to describe the trunk they had in storage, and this is it—same initials, same color, and you can see the storage tag pasted on the end yet."

"You got any more dope?"

"Yes, I had the house doctor down here, and he says that thing in the trunk is human. Clever job of embalming—all same as the Russians did with Lenin. Some silica preparation in the embalming fluid turns the corpse to a kind of glass—like a petrified tree. That's what the doc says."

RIORDAN examined the gruesome thing in the trunk once more, and went through the pockets of its clothes. The pockets were absolutely empty. There was no tailor's tag on the coat; whether there were laundry marks on the underclothes he could not tell.

The two suitcases revealed only that Mrs. Sulloway was evidently a woman

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of means and discrimination. Her baggage contained such gowns and other things as a traveler on shipboard would need during a brief cruise. All the toilet articles were silver mounted and bore the letters "L" and "S" in monogram. A check book showed considerable deposits in the First National Bank.

When Dr. Wilson, the coroner, arrived, they all went back to the trunk. The county official bore out the house physician's opinion—that the form was that of a man, expertly embalmed by a new process. With Riordan's assistance Dr. Wilson lifted the "petrified" corpse from the trunk; and despite the strangeness of its attitude, with the legs drawn up, he was able to make a considerable examination of the clothes and body.

"Ha," he said, pointing to what seemed a curious flaw in the workmanship of the form. "Case of murder—see that!"

The other two looked. In the back, below the shoulder, was a roughly puckered place.

"Very expertly knifed in the back," said the coroner. "Evidently a long, thin knife. Probably went on and punctured the heart—but we can't be sure unless I go to work with a chisel and hammer. I guess this is going to be one place where we hold an imaginary autopsy. Go to work on this man, and we'd break him up into pieces. Well, well—I've seen a lot of jobs, but none like this. We'll put him back in the trunk and I'll have the wagon come for it. Now let's see this woman."

Mrs. Sulloway, still in the hotel infirmary, was inclined to be hysterical. But they got her story by degrees. She was a widow, had been on a three-months trip to the islands on one of the midwinter "pleasure cruises." Before she left she had sold her house, stored most of her belongings. One trunk she had packed with things she would need on her return, while she was finding a place to live. The trunk in her room. She had sent for it, opened it, and been terrified.

No, she didn't know anybody that looked like the figure in the trunk. Yes, she was sure it was her trunk; a trunk she had owned for several years. No, none of her relatives were missing; and there was nobody she knew who hated her or her late husband enough to do a thing like this. She gave references for the officers to look up; and she insisted on being moved at once to a sanitarium, and would the hotel kindly forward her hand baggage after her?

"Well, Doc," said Riordan to the coroner, "I guess the next place we go is the storage warehouse. I got my car downstairs. . . ."

"Warehouse will be shut up for the night, Sarge."

"Watchman will be there—and we'll have him phone for the boss or somebody who knows. Let's go."

At the Pioneer Warehouse the watchman phoned for the superintendent. It took the latter only a moment to find the records of the Sulloway stuff.

"Most of it we've got in a locked room," he said. "This trunk you're talking about we left in one of the corridors, because she said she was going to send for it. If the trunk was robbed it didn't happen here. Must've been done on the transfer wagon."

"What made you think the trunk was opened?" asked Riordan.

The superintendent laughed. "Couple of you bulls come here, what else could it be?"

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"You've got a long head—like a horse," replied the sergeant. "This is the coroner, not another dick or a bull. Mister, the trunk had a nice corpse in it."

"Impossible. We'd have known. The odor—"

"Mister, this bird was embalmed very special."

"Then Mrs. Sulloway must have—"

"She says not. Let's go look where the trunk was, and then look at the rest of her stuff. Maybe you've got some more dead men locked away."

THE superintendent laughed nervously; led them to the corridor where what he called "transient parcels" were kept. There was a spot on the floor free of dust that showed plainly enough where the trunk had been. In the room where the balance of the Sulloway stuff was stored everything appeared in order. Two trunks, whose locks gave to the persuasion of skeleton keys that the superintendent had, revealed nothing except linen and clothing. A heavy box, on being investigated, contained books.

Down in the office the coroner began to ask questions.

"Anybody have access to that corridor?"

"Only the watchman and the help. The watchman has been with us eight years. I'd gamble on him. Our own help is all right, I think. Only strangers we get in here are truckmen bringing stuff or coming after it."

"Ever have visitors, and could they hide out inside?"

"We have lots of visitors," answered the superintendent. "People coming to look over the plant before they send their stuff here. People coming in to get parcels, or to open trunks for something they want. But nobody's brought any dead men in here to put in a trunk—it couldn't be done."

The coroner nodded. "Then the answer is simple," he said. "The man walked in, was killed here, and embalmed here. You got any more locked rooms, where that could be done?"

"God, you're hard!" exclaimed the superintendent. "To joke about a thing like that. Of course nobody—"

Dr. Wilson held up a hand. "I had a case like that. Man rented storage space on one of the docks, said he had a consignment of orchids coming in. Had the space all covered with sheet tin, said he'd have to keep the orchids damp. He got a shipment of orchids, too. One night he brought a man down to look at them. Week later we found him, lying dead on top of the orchids, in a locked room. So you see it can be done. We'll just take a look at all your locked rooms, and see what we can find."

Protesting, the superintendent got his keys and they made a tour of the huge building. Room after room they visited, and found nothing, except stored goods very emphatically all right, as far as could be ascertained. And so, after a tiring examination, they stood again in the corridor where the trunk had been.

"No more rooms, eh?" asked the coroner.

"You've seen the works."

"Where does that door go?" asked the county official.

"What we call Loft A," answered the superintendent. "It takes up all that side of the building, not divided by partitions. We use it for theatrical goods—scenery of busted shows, and stuff like that."

"Anything in it?"

The superintendent laughed. "There was a burlesque troupe broke

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up here three years ago. The sheriff seized what little they had—couple of back drops and some stuffed animals."

"Stuffed animals?"

"Yes. Man came here about six months ago, said he had a collection of stuffed lions and other animals. He paid a year's charges in advance, and brought his stuff in, one beast at a time, in a trailer he had tied on to the back of a flivver. Want to look?"

The coroner laughed. "Might as well—we've seen everything else. You sure these lions are dead?"

"They must be," replied the superintendent. "I never lock the door, and if they weren't they'd have walked out long ago."

He opened the door and snapped the switch. Riordan and the coroner heard the switch click, but no lights flashed on within.

"That's funny," said the superintendent. "Fuse must have blown. I've got an electric torch in the office, wait a minute and I'll get it."

"Got one in my pocket," said Riordan. He snapped on the beam and entered the dark oblong of the door.

"Suffering catfish—look!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER II

The Room of Madness

THE coroner peered over his shoulder. Directly in the glare from the flash-light was a lion, with flashing eyes and wide-spread jaws, while lying at its forepaws was the body of a man, back on the floor, and seemingly staring up, paralyzed with fear. Dr. Wilson drew in his breath sharply; the superintendent gave a scream and ran back down the hall.

Riordan shifted his torch, and its pencil of light moved through the gloom, to become fixed the next instant upon a ferocious looking tiger, snarling, apparently, over another inert form, this lying twisted as if in agony just before one of the beast's upraised paws.

Dr. Wilson let his breath out with a gentle hiss.

"Wait a minute, Sarge—better get light on this all at once," he said. "Getting it this way, in spasms, is a bit too hard on the nerves. Where'd that damn superintendent go—let's get him to fix these lights."

They closed the door, went back to the office. The watchman was standing there, scratching his head.

"Where's the boss?" asked Riordan.

"I'll never tell you," the man replied. "He went out of here like a bat out of hell. Eyes wide, face pale—ran right up the street. Left his car out there, too. Acted like he was crazy."

"Well, he might be at that, mister. What you've got to do is fix the lights in Loft A, though," said Riordan. "Fuse blown, or something. You know where the fuse-box is?"

"Sure, over here." The man went to a cupboard on the wall, pawed around inside a moment. "Huh, those fuses are all right," he said. "Must be somebody has took the globes out. Wait a minute, I'll get extra globes and a stepladder—"

"Never mind," interrupted Riordan. "I got a better idea; let me at that phone."

He moved to the instrument. "Hello, gimme Main 6000. . . . Desk? This is Riordan, of the dicks. Now listen—I'm not drunk nor anything like that—but I want a wagonload of bulls and the squad wagon down at the Pioneer Storage Warehouse right

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away. . . . Yes, that's right . . . and if you let any of those reporters come along I'll personally kill yuh when I get back in."

Eight men from the uniformed reserves and Detectives Enright and Stacy arrived first. One of the patrolmen Riordan planted in the superintendent's car; two he left in the warehouse office with the watchman, the others he told to scatter about the corridors of the big storage building.

To Enright and Stacy he said: "All yuh got to do is find out who's the superintendent of this place—I forgot to ask him his name—and then see if you can find him. Likely he'll be crazy when you get him, but I want him just the same."

Then the squad wagon arrived, its crew ready with life saving equipment.

"Yuh got carbide lamps?" shouted Riordan. "Couple of good, husky men with lamps will do. The rest of yuh stay outside. You men with the lamps follow Doc and me."

In Loft A the white glare of the chemical lamps revealed a scene that made one of the lamp-bearers hastily cross himself, while the other reached one hand for his gun. Riordan and the coroner entered the long room, walking gingerly in the sudden brightness as if they were afraid the still figures of animals and men would come suddenly into action.

The huge big room was a chamber of horrors. Not only did the lion and the tiger appear to have found human victims, but lying across the savage, open jaws of a huge crocodile was another still form. And to add to the terror of the scene was what appeared to be the body of some smaller animal, ripped open, and gaping horribly, as if it had been torn apart by one of the larger beasts in some fit of rage.

Emphasizing the gruesomeness of the tableau, in the rear of the room was a table, covered with basins and bottles, among which gleamed metal instruments as if some frightful feast or orgy had been held among these beasts of the wild.

The coroner took out a cigar and lighted it with shaking fingers. "Sarge, if I hadn't seen this, I wouldn't believe it," he said. "Somebody must have been crazy."

Riordan moved over to the human form lying in front of the lion, and nudged it with his toe.

"Bring one of them lamps up close," he shouted. "Doc, do your stuff—take a look and see is this real or just a wax figure."

DR. WILSON, not with any too much haste, came forward, looked at the stuffed lion, and knelt over the form before it. Then he moved to the ghastly tableau of the alligator and the man in its jaws, and was busy there for a minute. He stood up, rubbed the back of his hand over his forehead, and stared at the sergeant.

"Riordan — we got something. These were three men. Finished off the same as that man in the trunk. Riordan, this is the damnedest job we've ever had."

"These men killed the same—"

"Two of them, Sarge. The one by the lion was hit on the head—fractured skull."

Riordan drew a deep breath. "I'm going to send for the reporters, Doc. Let them see this, and they'll never worry about what they don't know. And the Belmont-Grand will appreciate not having any publicity. Doc, the guy we've got to work on is the man in the trunk at the hotel—we'll let the re-

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porters rave about these hombres here, and it will be a smoke-screen to cover us. As if we'd found the wrong end first. Yuh keep that guy in the trunk quiet, Doc. He's our lead."

The newspapers did very well, considering the things they knew and the things they didn't. Identity of the slain men was yet unknown. Police were holding the night watchman of the warehouse incommunicado; and the body of the superintendent lay on a slab at the morgue, having been found in the river where the man had jumped after fleeing from the police when the three bodies were discovered. Of course the papers did not say, specifically, that either the superintendent or watchman was the murderer—they had to regard the libel laws—but the implication was there.

Chief Roberts, fairly satisfied with the world, went upstairs to the detective bureau soon after his arrival at headquarters and strode into the small office where Captain of Detectives Brady held forth during the day.

"Nice work last night, Brady," he said. "And that guy jumping into the drink and killing himself didn't hurt, either. What's the watchman got to say? He broke down and belched yet?"

"The watchman ain't even been asked yet to belch," replied the detective captain, looking up from his reports. "Chief, you been reading the papers. This warehouse superintendent didn't commit suicide, Chief. He just went nuts at what he saw, and ran into the river. Never knew he was stepping off the dock, or anything. What happened was this: they found a body in a trunk up at the Belmont-Grand, and in checking on that the boys run into this stuffed animal circus down to the warehouse. Here are the reports."

He passed a sheaf of slips over to the head of the department, who scowled and began to pore over them.

"Well, I'm damned!" exclaimed the chief, twenty minutes later. "Let's get that watchman in here and talk to him. Nobody could kill three men in the warehouse and him not know it!"

Brady shook his head. "Doc Wilson has the watchman, Chief. Had him moved up to the county jail early this morning. He wants to save him awhile, Chief. Give him a chance to think things over. To tell you the truth, Chief, both Doc and Riordan ain't so sure the watchman knows anything about this at all!"

"Don't know anything about it," exploded Roberts. "Well, for cryin' out loud. You think a watchman could ring boxes all night in that place and not know some voodoo-worshippin' maniac was killin' people before a lot o' stuffed lions an' tigers?"

Brady waved his hands. "I'm only telling you, Chief, what Doc says. Him and Riordan. They claim this was a expert job—no hophead or maniac at all. They claim it is deep stuff. They—"

The chief leaped up, stamped his foot. "Deep stuff my eye!" he shouted. "This is a nut job. Shows it on its face. I don't care what the coroner thinks. Now we'll show him up. Brady, I want you to go at this right. Find out who stored them animals in that place—any man what has a collection of stuffed beasts ought not to be hard to run down. Get that man, and make him talk. Have somebody go see this woman at the sanitarium—"

The telephone on Brady's desk jingled, and the chief stopped abruptly. The detective captain turned to answer the call, listened, answered briefly, and hung up.

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"Some shyster," he said to Roberts. "Wants to see this watchman, says he's the man's attorney."

"What attorney?" barked Roberts.

"Gordon Bowles."

"Shyster is right—let him come see me when he gets his writ."

Brady laughed. "Don't worry, he will. He'll serve it on you."

DR. WILSON was conferring with Roberts when Mr. Bowles arrived. The department head had changed his ideas on the curious case after hearing the county official's reports and conclusions, and was staring thoughtfully at the floor.

"No hard feelings, Chief," said the attorney. "You understand there's nothing personal about this. I represent Mr. Larson, the watchman, that's all. I've got to talk to him, or else I've got a writ from Judge Davis."

"Go talk to him," snapped Roberts. "He isn't here. Go find him. We turned him out this morning—go look at the jail register."

"Counsellor," drawled the coroner, "I'm investigating a homicide—officially, you understand. Your interest in this man, Larson, the watchman, interests me—interests me officially. How long have you represented him?"

"I represent him now, Doctor. I don't think—"

"Counsellor, you want to think. How long have you represented Mr. Larson?"

The attorney shrugged. "Well, if you've got to know, a party asked me this morning to look after him."

"Who asked you to?"

"That's a privileged matter, Doctor. I don't—"

"Mr. Bowles, I shall have to arrest you. For withholding information vital to the investigation of a felony."

"Arrest me? Hell, you can't do that. A lawyer—"

"The law, Counsellor, gives the coroner wide powers. You evidently have not familiarized yourself with the law. The coroner may even arrest the sheriff—for cause. In a case like this he may arrest any person whom he believes is withholding information vital to the investigation. Who asked you to interest yourself in this matter?"

Mr. Bowles was no fool.

"Doctor, I'm willing to take your word for it," he said. "I'll tell you—but I'll have to ask you not to tell the party where you got your information. He wouldn't like it."

"I'll protect you, Bowles—that's all I can promise."

"All right—I'll take your word. It was Thaddeus Rush."

The coroner frowned; the chief's eyes snapped. Both knew Thaddeus Rush. Senior member of the legal firm of Rush, Calhoun, Dinwoodie and Rush, he was, perhaps, the most noted and most profoundly respected barrister in the city.

"Thaddeus Rush asked you to interest yourself in this watchman? Will you tell me the exact details—what was said, everything?"

Bowles sensed the seriousness in the coroner's voice. "It was funny, in a way, Doctor," he replied. "I hadn't been in my office more than ten minutes this morning when my stenographer came in and gave me Thad Rush's card. I was surprised. I thought somebody was kidding me. I had the party in, and it was old Thad himself, upstage and high-and-mighty like he always is.

"He said he and another attorney—didn't tell me who—had a hen on—he meant a case pending—and that this man Larson might be important. They

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didn't want him in jail when the case came up.

"'You can see,' he said, 'why we don't want to appear in Larson's behalf just now. I would appreciate it if you would get him released. Do anything you have to; and I'll see that you are paid for your trouble.' Well, what could I do, when Thad Rush himself came to me like that? I hopped right to it."

"What's the rest of it?" demanded the coroner. "What did Rush want you to have Larson do when he was sprung?"

"Nothing—except to see that he returned to his work," the lawyer answered hesitantly.

Dr. Wilson nodded. "All right, Counsellor. Now listen: Larson is not in jail. The records show he was released. That's all they show. You can tell Rush, if you want, that you had him sprung. If he doesn't show back at work, that isn't your fault. Get your fee if you can. But bear this in mind—if I learn you have told Rush about our conversation I will arrest you as an accessory after the fact in a homicide case. I mean every word of it—You may go."

CHAPTER III

Gags of Death

THE attorney departed, serious-faced. At noon his body was found lying in the courtyard of the building in which he had his office. Investigation by the detectives and coroner's men indicated that while he was alone in his suite, during his stenographer's lunch-hour, he had gone to the window to raise the sash. The window was jammed. In his effort to lift it, it appeared, he had lost his balance, and, unable to catch himself, had fallen through the glass and plunged to his death thirteen stories below.

"If it was me," said Chief Roberts, "I'd have called old Thad Rush as a witness."

They were sitting in the coroner's office at the court-house, after an inquest at which a jury had found that Attorney Bowles came to his death "from wounds received in an accidental fall from the window of his office." Aside from Roberts and Dr. Wilson, Captain Brady and Detective Sergeant Riordan were in the room.

"No," said the coroner, slowly, "no, Chief, that wouldn't do. Of course, personally I believe that Rush knew Bowles had lied to him. He may have found out that Bowles belched. But if we'd called Thad it would have tipped our hand."

"I can't figure Thad Rush as a killer," declared Brady. "A man with a record like his doesn't change all of a sudden. Thad is a big man—and too wise to take a chance."

The coroner nodded. "I don't figure Thad did it, myself," he said, slowly. "Or that he had it done. But Thad Rush represents some pretty big people, and he may have told a client that this man Bowles turned out to be a weak vessel."

"Anybody checking Rush's clients?" the chief asked.

Dr. Wilson smiled. "All my deputies and Riordan here, together with half his night force. It happens that one of Riordan's young boys knows one of the women in Rush's office. She is the personal secretary of young Willis Rush, the old man's boy, who's just out of law school. So we were able to get quite a list of the firm's clients."

"Of course some of them we had to pass up," the coroner continued. "You can't check on the big corporations he

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represents—not in one day, anyhow. But this thing doesn't look like a corporation job. Out of this list"—the coroner tapped the papers in his hand —" there's only one name that we can't get anything on. Old Peter Granger —you know anything about him, Chief?"

Roberts looked up sharply, laughed. " Pete Granger, the old loan shark? Sure I know him. Forget him—he's in Honolulu or some place. Went away last summer or spring. I guess things got pretty hot for him, or the depression put his business on the bum. Old 'Thirty Percent Granger,' they called him. Lend you money on anything and charge you more interest than the loan itself. Must be filthy rich. I guess he went away to blow it in his old age."

" He don't happen to be in Honolulu," said Riordan, speaking for the first time. "I was checking him myself. I cabled the Honolulu police there, and they say not."

" Likely flew the coop," snorted Roberts. " The reformers and whatnot were making it hot for him. He probably said he was going to Honolulu, took his car and drove to Salt Lake, Reno, or some place, and bought tickets there to South America. Old buck like him, with all the money in the world, he could have a good time in some place down there, where nobody knew him."

"I guess so, Chief," Riordan said. " But they got no South American drafts down at the Farmers' & Drovers' Bank, where his money is. I checked there, too, and they tell me he's got close to a coupla million dollars in there, just drawin' interest every day. Haven't had a check of his for three months."

The head of the department scowled. " You've been wasting your time, like you usually do. Likely Pete Granger took a sockful with him when he went. Doc, why don't you come down to earth on this job? You've got that watchman at the warehouse—have him in and lean on him. He must know something."

The coroner pulled at his chin. " Good idea, Roberts," he answered. " Only one thing the matter with it. I was figuring on leaving Larson in solitary long enough to worry him. It seems I did—he hung himself in his cell at the county jail this evening. Roberts, this is no nut job—somebody very wise and very powerful is busy on it."

" BUT there must be some ragged end! These petrified men in the warehouse—you identified—"

" We identified nobody, Roberts. Not a mark on their clothes, not a scrap of paper in their pockets. No laundry numbers on their linen; they had new shirts and underwear of brands that are sold everywhere."

" The man who left the stuffed animals?"

" Name of Joel Kermit on the warehouse books. Storage charges said to have been paid in cash. We can't find anybody who even saw him."

" But the animals," insisted the chief. " Some taxidermist must have mounted them!"

" Surely, Chief. We found where the labels had been torn off. I've had telegraphic queries broadcast to all the leading taxidermists, but don't expect much. The embalming was done there in the warehouse, Roberts. That's what all that stuff on the table was; instruments, syringes, flasks to hold the fluids they used. No fingerprints; they wore rubber gloves.

" I've an idea they brought a lot of

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the junk they had into the place inside those animals. The alligator had a panel on the bottom—you could take it out, you know—and the whole body was just a shell. It was scratched on the inside as if it had held things. Most any of those animals could have been used to hide things in; the skin had been stretched over a frame, with the stuffing just under the skin."

The phone on the coroner's desk tinkled. Dr. Wilson reached for the instrument. "No, he's not here—he just left," the others heard him say. "What was it?" The county official listened a while, then repeated what he had said first.

"No, he isn't here. Likely you'll hear from him soon."

He hung up, looked at Roberts. "Your place," he said. "I didn't want to say you were here. It was Lieutenant Sprague. He wanted you; he said the bull you've got in charge down at the warehouse called him and said some woman was phoning about her trunk. Wanted to know if she could get it. She said she was Mrs. Sulloway."

The men stared at him. Then the chief laughed. "She's got away on you," he said. "Slipped out on you!"

The coroner shook his head. "Wrong, twice, Roberts. In the first place those nurses wouldn't let her leave; in the second place the last thing she'd want was that trunk—even if she did leave. Chief, somebody's beginning to worry about that trunk."

Roberts rose from his chair. "I'll go right down to the warehouse. Be there if they call again. Tell 'em to come and get the trunk. We'll see who it is."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but you'd better not," spoke up Detective Sergeant Riordan. "It would tip our hand. Official there's nothin' about the trunk. But if you go down there an' turn this trunk loose—it looks to me like you're showin' special interest in it."

"The boy's right," said Brady.

"Poppycock," said the chief. "If I happen to be at the warehouse when this woman calls up that don't tip anything. Anyway, I'm going."

He swung to the door and departed. Captain Brady chuckled.

"Wants to make the big pinch," he said. "I don't blame him none. But I bet he kicks his foot an' falls down."

Dr. Wilson shrugged. "Well," he said, "I guess I'll amble out to the sanitarium and see my patient. Perhaps she'll be able to talk a little bit about this thing. I'll call you boys if I run across any leads."

Brady and Riordan returned to headquarters, the latter to sign on for the evening; and the captain to close his work for the day.

In the neighborhood of eleven o'clock, as Riordan was sipping coffee at his desk to assist in keeping his eyes open, the civil clerk entered the inner office.

"Gent outside to see you, Sarge. I tol' him you was busy for a little while. Want me to sneak your coffee out the back door?"

"What gent?"

"Lawyer, Sarge. Name o' Rush. I didn't get the first name. Old geezer, high-toned."

The sergeant drained his cup, put it and its saucer in the lower drawer of his desk, found a cigar and lighted it.

"Have him in," he said. "Come in with him; then go over to the files in the back of the room an' make believe you're checking reports. Keep quiet, but keep actin' like you were working steady; keep rustlin' paper, but keep

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your ears open. This may be somethin'."

CHAPTER IV

Riordan Starts Digging

THADDEUS RUSH entered the inner office, looked slowly around, sat himself down in a chair to which Riordan motioned. He did not appear to notice the civil clerk, who padded across the room behind him and busied himself at the filing cabinets.

"I am Thaddeus Rush. Quite possibly you have heard of me, and know—"

"Yes, Mr. Rush. Riordan is the name, I'm in charge here nights. What was it, please?"

"Oh, you are Sergeant Riordan, eh? I've heard of you."

The visitor cleared his throat, took a cigar from a leather pocket case, lighted it, puffed silently a moment.

"I have a problem, Sergeant, and I thought likely you people down here could aid me. You see, Sergeant, my firm represents a number of important firms and people. Old families, mostly, and old business enterprises. And reading of all this violence lately, I have been wondering—oh, well, I'll speak quite frankly. You know Peter Granger?"

Riordan nodded. "I know who he is, sir. But that's about all. Mortgage broker, isn't he?"

The ghost of a smile appeared on the elderly attorney's face. In a long life he had heard his client, Granger, called a lot of things, but never before anything so mild as the term Riordan had used.

"Peter Granger was a peculiar man," he said. "Because of his business, which was a legitimate business, he—er—had many enemies. Well—I have not heard from Granger for a considerable time. There are routine matters, legal matters, that he should have attended to. Letters from my firm have not been answered. And with all these things happening—I have begun to wonder if—if anything has gone wrong."

The lawyer paused, looked at Riordan through the smoke rising from his cigar. The sergeant made no reply, simply regarded his visitor steadily.

"So I have come here," Rush resumed, "to ask your advice. I want to find where Granger is, discover if any misfortune has befallen him. How should I go about it? What would you suggest?"

Riordan tipped back in his chair, blew a cloud of smoke at the ceiling.

"There's private investigators, sir," he suggested. "Two or three good agencies have branches in the city."

Rush nodded. "Yes, I know. I have thought of that. But—er—I imagined the police looked after cases like this, as a matter of routine."

"Only when somebody puts in a 'missing persons' report, sir. Down at the desk, downstairs, they have the forms. Anybody been missing for more than forty-eight hours, why, the next of kin, or some interested party, fills out one of these forms."

"Um—there's some notoriety attached to that, isn't there?"

"Naturally, sir. It helps turn people up. Copy of the report is put where the papers can get it. You want to make a missing persons report on Granger? I can get one of the forms up here."

Rush slowly shook his head. "No, Sergeant, not that way. I do not want any talk about this. I thought that, perhaps, it could be handled—confidentially."

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Riordan smiled. "Might be, sir. But I think you'd better drop in tomorrow and see the chief, sir. He'd know you—as a prominent citizen, and all that. He could order a quiet search—me, I wouldn't have authority, sir. I'm just a sergeant."

The lawyer nodded, reached in his pocket. His purse appeared in his hands, he drew a bill from it, crumpled it, flicked it to Riordan's desk. The sergeant's eyes did not move.

"I had thought that perhaps you, Sergeant, in your spare moments, might make some inquiries—and let me know. Mr. Granger had planned to go away. He was going to leave a forwarding address, but neglected to do so. A matter has come up—a legal matter—that demands attention. I wish you could—assist us."

Riordan smiled again, reached out a hand, picked up the crumpled currency, and smoothed it on his knee. It was a twenty-dollar bill. He tucked it in a vest pocket under his uniform coat.

"I'd want two things for my boys to work on," he said.

"Yes?"

"Photograph of Granger, and a list of the women he knew. You know what I mean, the women he went on parties with. Every man as well off as Granger is throws a party now and then."

"Granger was very averse to having his photograph taken," said Rush.

"You heard what I said. Need a picture and a list of his women. Yuh can find out more from a woman than from any other place, specially if yuhr a dick. There must be some picture of Granger somewhere—if he didn't sit for one, why, one taken at some lodge group or club. I'd have to have a picture."

The lawyer looked at Riordan for a long time. Then he slowly rose from his chair. "I may be able to find a—photograph, Sergeant. I do not know, but it may be possible. I will see. If I find it, I will send it to you tomorrow. And the—the names you want. Thank you, you will hear from me."

He turned, walked slowly from the room. Riordan swung about to his desk, pulled down a record book, banged it open and began to enter slips in it. On the other side of the room the civil clerk continued to rustle files. For two or three minutes there was no other sound in the office save the scratching of the sergeant's pen and the gentle shuffling of paper. Then Riordan swung about again.

"JUST heard the gate outside squeak," he said. "He's gone. You can forget them files. Foxy old pussyfoot. I figgered he'd stall outside the door and listen—probably stood there and buttoned his coat, or made monkey-business over relighting his cigar. You hear what he said?"

"Yes, Sarge."

"Yuh see what he did?"

The civil clerk came forward, grinning. "Yes, Sergeant, he threw you a piece of change."

Riordan laughed, reached under his coat. "Yuh know everythin', don't yuh? Well, here's twenty bucks out of it—take it an' remember all yuh heard; but forget what yuh saw. Yuh get me?"

The civil clerk grinned widely, nodded quickly. "I never see a thing, Sarge," he said. "You know my back was turned all the time."

Early the next afternoon a large, heavy envelope, taped about its center for added security, and bearing a Bon Marché Department Store delivery tag,

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came for Riordan. From it he drew a cabinet-size photo, to which was clipped a sheet of bond letter paper, bearing a list of typed women's names. The sergeant scanned the names, smiling slightly once or twice, then flicked the paper back and looked at the photograph. His eyes opened wide; he whistled, covered the picture quickly with the sheet of paper, and slipped it back into the envelope. Captain Brady had turned at his aide's whistle of surprise.

"What is it, boy? And why try and hide it?" he asked.

"Say, Chief—in this warehouse job did anybody in the bureau ever check on this Sulloway woman? Yuh know—the one who had the trunk the petrified body was jammed into?" Riordan asked.

Brady shrugged. "Must have, boy. I remember seeing a report on her somewhere: widow woman, sold her house and stored her stuff while she was on an ocean trip to get over her sorrow."

Riordan reached for his telephone. He called Dr. Wilson. "Say, Doc," he demanded, "you ever check on that patient o' yuhrs, that Mrs. Sulloway?"

"She told me her story," replied the county official. "There was no need of checking on it. She was too wrought up at the time to have spoken anything but the truth."

"She's recovered, has she, Doc?"

"Mentally, yes, Sarge. Physically I would say she still needs rest and quiet."

Riordan laughed. "Well, Doc, yuh better go out an' see her this afternoon. Later, I mean. I'm goin' out there now. She may have another shock—yuh can't tell."

He hung up, turned to face Brady. "I've been a damn fool, Chief," he said. "Been fooled on this homicide job like everybody else. Now I'm goin' out an' start diggin'."

HE rose from his chair, and was gone, carrying the envelope. At the sanitarium his shield got him admitted to Mrs. Sulloway's room, even though Dr. Wilson had given orders she was to be allowed no visitors.

A trained nurse was sitting with the convalescent patient.

"Keep yuhr seat, miss," Riordan said to the nurse. "I jus' want to talk to Mrs. Sulloway a minute—jus' a matter of routine." He sat down, put his hat and the department store envelope he carried on a table beside him, drew out a notebook and pencil. "Don't want to bother yuh but a minute or so, Mrs. Sulloway. Sorry I had to come at all. But we got to get our records filled out accordin' to rule. I got yuhr name, Mrs. Sulloway—now, what is the address, please? Yuhr home, I mean."

Mrs. Sulloway smiled. "Why, I really have no address unless you say the sanitarium here," she replied. "You see, I had just returned from a trip—"

"Yes, ma'am, I know. But we got to have a address. What was the street number o' the house where yuh lived before yuhr—before yuh went away?"

The woman plied her needle for two or three stitches, then looked up again. "Perhaps you had better put down the—the hotel. You see I—I sold my home."

"We already got the hotel, ma'am. That's the 'place where trouble occurred.' But we got to have yuhr home address." Riordan's face, the nurse noted, was completely expressionless. He was, she decided, one of

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those perfect examples of a dumb policeman, whose life was governed by routine, and who never experienced the thrill of an original thought, or a quick thought, either.

Mrs. Sulloway moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue. "The address was 86 Decatur Street, officer."

Riordan tipped back in his chair. His expression did not change in the slightest, nor the tone of his voice. "Ain't that funny, lady?" he said. "The house at 86 Decatur is a two-family frame. Downstairs is a cobbler an' his shop, upstairs is old Mrs. Long, who rents rooms to workin' girls. I would never have said yuh could ha' got all that furniture yuh stored out o' old lady Long's dump, an' her not raise a yell about it."

The nurse's opinion of Riordan changed very suddenly. She shifted her glance to her patient. Mrs. Sulloway was holding her fancy work suspended in mid-air, her hands motionless.

She was staring at the sergeant, eyes wide, hardly breathing. After a moment she lowered her hands to her lap.

"You must be mistaken," she said, quietly enough.

"Lady, I ain't mistaken. Before I was made a dick I walked beat on Decatur. Ma'am, yuh could save yuhrself an' me a lot o' trouble by talkin'. We've kept yuh covered so far, ain't we?"

The woman nodded slightly. Moistened her lips again.

"You—Dr. Wilson—exceptionally considerate." Her voice had the barest tremble to it. "I think it has aided my—recovery. Naturally I was—was profoundly shocked."

Riordan reached for the envelope, thrust his hand within, separated the sheet of bond paper from the photograph, and passed the slip with its typing to Mrs. Sulloway.

"Yuh happen to know any of these parties, ma'am?" he asked.

She took the paper, and the nurse noted her hand was steady enough. She let her eyes travel over the typed names, slowly shook her head. "I have never heard of any of them. Who are they?"

"Ma'am, they might ha' been lodgers with old lady Long, at one time or another. Yuh lived with her? To her place?"

"I stayed there for a time; before—before I was married, officer."

"Uh-huh. An' so that was how-come yuh give me that address, eh? Well, let that go. How about the furniture yuh stored? What was it? How yuh come to have it?"

"The furniture was—my husband bought the furniture for—for our home."

"Uh-huh. An' yuh never moved in, eh? Well, it happens that way, sometimes. Listen, was yuhr husban' named Sulloway?"

The woman's breathing became rapid. The nurse shifted uneasily in her chair, but Riordan shot a glance at her.

"No," replied the patient, her voice a bare whisper. "His name—I used my own name . . ."

Riordan put his hand in the envelope again. "I got his picture here," he said, "yuh want to see it?"

The woman sprang violently from her chair.

"Good God, no!" she shrieked, and fell to the floor. The nurse leaped forward. Riordan got up, turned toward the door.

"Don't worry, sister," he said. "Doc Wilson will be here any minute.

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Put her to bed an' give her a shot in the arm. I got to be on my way."

CHAPTER V

The Secret of the Photo

WHEN Dr. Wilson returned to his own office an hour and a half afterward, he found Riordan seated at his desk, just hanging up after a telephone conversation. The coroner closed the door behind him, pushed his hat back on his head, and came forward.

"What the devil did you do to Mrs. Sulloway?" he demanded. "You want to kill that woman?"

"I said I might give her a shock, Doc, when I phoned yuh. At that she was lucky. She read my mind, or she might ha' had a real shock. Doc, I got a picture here. Want to see it?"

He drew the photo from the envelope, tossed it to the coroner.

"Suffering catfish!" Dr. Wilson exclaimed. "Where did you get that? Who is it, do you know?"

The sergeant smiled. "Yuh act like yuh was havin' a shock too, Doc."

The coroner jumped up. "Did you show this to Mrs. Sulloway?"

"No, Doc. She said she didn't want to see, and fell over in a faint. She must ha' read my mind; or knew what the picture was."

Dr. Wilson stood staring, first at the photograph, then at Riordan. Finally he shook his head.

"Sarge, this isn't like you. This is a picture of the man in the trunk—the man Mrs. Sulloway saw when she lifted the lid. Think what it would have done to her, to see that face again."

Riordan grunted. "Yuh think she'd remember that face, an' I'd forget it, Doc? I saw it afore yuh did. Remember they called me to the hotel while she was still havin' hysterics. It was me that called yuh. Doc, we was both woozy that day—we figgered this woman got her shock because she opened a trunk an' found a petrified man in it. We was sorry for her; we thought what a shock it must ha' been to her, an' all that. Doc, it never occurred to us that what shocked her wasn't findin' a dead man in her trunk, *but recognizin' who it was!*"

"Humph, that's a thought, Sarge. What gave you the idea?"

"Doc, I been stuck on this job. Today I got to studyin' over it an' I see the reason we was stuck was because we'd been working the wrong way. We'd been lookin' for a loose end, instead o' takin' the end we had.

"So I phoned yuh, an' then went out to the sanitarium to parley this woman. She'd recovered enough to use her head. Doc, when a woman uses her head she usually lies.

"Well, I parleyed this woman. She knew I was a dick, an' she begun to lie to me. Not meanin' no harm, yuh know—just coverin' up. Like they always do. I blew up a coupla o' her lies, an' she see I knew more than mebbe she'd want me to know. Then I tol' her I had a picture o' her husban', an' asked her did she want to see it. She went straight up an' out—clean out. Doc, that's a picture o' old Pete Granger, the loan shark, missin' now some three months."

The coroner stroked his chin, considered the words he had heard, and their implications. "You mean—you mean you think this woman killed—no, that's impossible!"

"Impossible in this case, Doc. What I mean is that the first she knew he was dead was when she saw him in the trunk."

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"Horrible," said the coroner, with a shudder. "Horrible to open a trunk and find your husband dead and stuffed into it."

Riordan shook his head. "Horrible enough, Doc—but the thing that give her the shock was to find out he was dead, and all her chance o' gettin' two, three million dollars had gone flooey!"

Dr. Wilson's eyes opened. "Gone flooey? What do you mean? If she's his widow . . ." His voice stopped suddenly.

"Yeah," said Riordan, with a chuckle. "Look at it, Doc. They're married secret. She goes away, comes back, after two, three months, an' finds Granger is murdered an' stuffed into her trunk. She'd had the trunk sent to the warehouse, and kept separate from the rest o' the stuff. Granger was an ol' crab, old enough to be her father. She was a young woman, had been workin' for her livin'. Had lived in a workin' girls' lodgings. I got that much out o' her. How would it look? She claims this is her husban' stuffed dead in her trunk. What chance would she have to get his money? All Granger's hoarded money. It would seem like she killed him for it. She seen that—that was what set her off."

THE coroner frowned. "But these other men, the other bodies, preserved the same way—"

"She didn't know about them when she opened the trunk. Likely don't know about 'em yet if yuhr nurse at the sanitarium was any good an' kept the papers from her. It is the other stiffs that are her alibi, Doc—but she don't know it yet. That's why she went up this afternoon when I talked to her; she figgered I'd found out who her husband was, an' that I was goin' to pull her for homicide."

Dr. Wilson glanced at the photograph again. "Where did you get this?"

"Doc, yuh'll die laughin' when I tell yuh. Thad Rush sent it to me."

The coroner did not laugh, but he started and sat upright in his chair. Riordan waved his hands.

"Doc, we got Thad Rush stickin' his nose into this all the way through. It is Thad Rush sends that shyster to see the Old Man with palaver about a habeas corpus to get Larson, the watchman, sprung out o' jail. Unless I make a bum guess, it was Thad Rush had some woman—his private secretary, likely—telephone the warehouse about that trunk. It is Thad Rush comes to me last night an' slips me twenty bucks to make a quiet inquiry to see where has Peter Granger disappeared to. Thad Rush promised to send me ol' Granger's photograph, could he find one, and the names o' the women he partied round with. I get the photograph today—an' the women's names—in a Bon Marché envelope. Thad is chief counsel for the Bon Marché. Now what does that show?

"It shows, Doc, that Thad knew Granger was dead! That likely he knew he was killed in the warehouse. An' he wanted to bring it out. We have never said nothin' about the trunk. All we give the papers was them stiffs in the chamber o' horrors. All anybody knows—outside of yuh an' the department—is that we found a warehouse full o' horrible corpses.

"But Thad knew Granger was dead, an' he wanted to bring it out. But he don't want to leave any tracks. He comes to me as Granger's attorney an' reports him missin'. He sends me the photograph in such a way I can't prove he sent it. It would be my word against

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his, an' he's a big lawyer. But he knew Granger was dead. Yuh see?"

Again Dr. Wilson considered the words—and their implications. He shook his head. "It don't fit, Sarge," he protested. "If Thaddeus Rush had killed Granger, he would be the last man to try and bring this thing into the open."

"I didn't say Thad killed Granger, Doc. There's nothing to show that he did. I said he wanted to bring out the fact that Granger was dead. Which is very different."

"But why would Rush do that, or want to do it? He was Granger's attorney—"

"Because, Doc, he knew Granger was married. If Granger is married, and gets killed, the widow comes into the estate. But if Thad can frame it so the widow is scared off, or so it would look like she killed him—then Thad Rush, as attorney, stands a good chance o' bein' named administrator o' the estate. An' administerin' an estate o' two, three million bucks is a nice job for a lawyer."

There came a knock at the door. Dr. Wilson opened the portal, and young Detective Willis entered. He nodded to the coroner, walked over to the desk, snapped a salute to Riordan.

"I got it, Sarge," he said. "But I darn near had to promise to marry the girl before she'd talk."

The sergeant laughed, looked at Dr. Wilson. "I've had Willis workin' on young Rush's stenographer up there in the office. Willis has a way with the women—he charms 'em. Well, son, what did yuh get?"

Willis smiled. "Old Granger got himself married about four months ago, Sarge. It seems he was out on one of his sprees, and somewhere he runs across a dame who looks good to him. She must have been a nice girl, because he fell hard for her; so hard they went over to Jefferson County and were married by a justice of the peace. And after Granger sobered up and realized what he'd done, he wanted out. So he comes to Thaddeus Rush and tells him to fix it. Rush says it will take some fixing, but Granger says go ahead and fix it—he don't want to settle down any, not at all.

"So, as they have the dirt in the office, Rush tells Granger to beat it somewhere. Go away and hide out. Then he goes to the wife—Granger had her planted somewhere—and he tells her Granger has been called away on business. He says he is Granger's personal counsel, and that Granger has asked him to fix up a home for them, buy furniture and whatever is needed. He sends his own private secretary out with this wife to go shopping; gives her a hatful of money, and all that.

"I guess, Sarge, it was fine for a week or so; and then the wife must have got suspicious. The wife picks out a house, wants to buy it. It is a nice little cottage out on the Boulevard, a nice little cottage costing about ten thousand bucks. Rush tries to stall her on the house, but she says how can she buy furniture till she has the house to put it in? So Rush advances her ten grand. And then she disappears—the wife does, I mean.

"Doesn't buy the house, just blows. Rush is all steamed up over it at first; then he thinks maybe it is good riddance, after all; that she was just a gold-digger, and that ten grand was her size, and having got it, she has blown. It looks like a good way out. Rush is all stewed up over it at first; to Jefferson County and file a quiet suit for divorce or annulment on the

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grounds the wife has flew the coop. That's all this frail knew—and, believe me, I had to work to beat the band to pry it out of her."

Riordan looked at the coroner. Dr. Wilson nodded. The sergeant shifted his glance to Willis.

"Yuh're a good boy, son," he said. "Yuh done a lot more than yuh know. Beat it out o' here now—better go back to headquarters an' sit near a phone. I may want yuh later."

CHAPTER VI

Riordan Springs a Surprise

THADDEUS RUSH spent several evenings each week at the Bar Association Library. He did not go there to read law, but to be observed and to spread his dignity. As the leading attorney of the city, it paid him to patronize the lesser lights and to mingle with them grandly at this exclusive retreat. Many a humbler lawyer, at the library studying recent Reports and delving into Opinions, would ask Thad for advice—and wind up by engaging Thad or some member of his firm as associate counsel in a trial.

He was at the library this night, and it was there Inspector Halloran found him. Halloran was a huge man, a veteran of many years pounding beat, and more lately elevated to the detective bureau. He tipped the scales at two hundred and eleven pounds, was all bone and hard muscle, had a red, weather-beaten face, and pig-like, rheumy eyes.

"Halloran I am, sir," he wheezed at Rush. "Sergeant Riordan sent me to find you. To tell you he has information about the party you wanted, and for you to come with me."

He placed a ham-like paw on Rush's arm. The attorney shook it off and rose from his chair.

"Keep your hands off me," he snapped. "I am not a prisoner. I don't have to be led."

Halloran smiled, mirthlessly. "Excuse me, sir. It was just habit. Usually when I'm sent for some party I have to bring him—if you know what I mean."

They left the library together, walked toward headquarters. Several times Halloran put one of his huge paws on Rush's arm; each time the attorney shook himself free, petulantly—and each time Halloran apologized. The result was the attorney arrived at the detective bureau in no sweet humor, resenting Halloran's "habit"; and the greeting he received from Captain Brady added nothing to his peace of mind.

"What's this I hear about twenty dollars?" snapped the captain. "My sergeant, here, says you slipped him twenty bucks. I don't like that idea at all, Mr. Rush."

The attorney laughed, dropped into a chair. "The man was a fool to tell you, Brady. It was a matter just between us. I had asked him to do me a special favor . . ."

"Don't do it again," Brady barked. "We're public officers, here to do proper favors. Rush, I didn't like it at all, when I was told."

The captain turned to his desk. Rush smiled—he had noticed Brady said nothing about the twenty dollars being returned. Then his glance traveled across the room to Riordan.

The sergeant grinned at Brady's broad back, winked at Thad Rush. "We found that party yuh give us the picture of—yuh know who I mean," said Riordan. "Foun' him in the morgue."

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Rush gave an involuntary start, then settled back in his chair again. He stared at Riordan; shifted his eyes to Brady. The captain's back was still turned, he seemed busy at some routine. He looked back at the sergeant.

"My, my—that is a great shock," he said. "Dead, eh? Can you tell me the circumstances?"

"I sent the picture over to Doc Wilson, the coroner," replied Riordan. "Matter o' form. Always, in a missin' persons case, we check the coroner's office. Doc, he phoned back he had him on a slab."

"It doesn't seem possible," said the attorney. "How did it happen—his death, I mean?"

"Couldn't say, sir," answered Riordan. "Doc said he'd be right over. I sent the big lummox there for you as soon as I heard, figgered yuh an' the coroner would get here the same time. I knew yuh'd want to know."

Rush turned his head quickly. He had forgotten all about the huge detective. The gross, ungainly man was standing beside the door, looking bigger than ever in the small office. For a moment the little room was absolutely quiet, then the door opened and two men came in. One of them Rush recognized as the coroner; the other he did not remember having seen before—a young man, wiry in build, with an intelligent face.

The young man closed the door behind him and moved over toward the wall to stand beside the towering bulk of Halloran. The coroner, dragged forward a chair, sat down beside Riordan's desk.

"Well, Mr. Rush," he said, "the Sarge, here, tells me you're interested in a case I got. Maybe you can give me some information."

"I came here to get information myself, Doctor," the attorney declared. "I was profoundly shocked when the Sergeant told me—told me what you had found. I was Mr. Granger's counsel, you know. There is a matter—"

"Divorce suit in Jefferson County, yes, I know," interrupted the coroner. "Tell us about that, Rush. It may shed some light on how he come to be stabbed. Who was this woman? You know anything about her?"

"Stabbed?" There was genuine amazement in Rush's tone.

Dr. Wilson nodded. "Three of 'em stabbed, one had his head beat in. What you know about this woman Granger had a jam with?"

"Woman? Three stabbed, one—"

The attorney's mouth shut suddenly, the muscles of his jaws tensed as he kept it shut. He looked from the coroner to Captain Brady, then to Riordan.

"Oh, come, Rush," said the coroner, waving his hands. "Don't stall. This isn't official—just between us here. We know all about it. That is, we know some of it. Granger was in this bunch up at the warehouse. You read about all that in the papers, of course. As to the woman, she belched, when we finally rounded her up. Granger's wife, she was, she said. Only she was suing him for divorce. Swears she hadn't seen him for three, four months. Myself, I think she's in the clear. We've checked on her story, and so far it stands. Found the divorce complaint, everything."

Thaddeus Rush stared at Dr. Wilson. "I think you are crazy," he said. "I know nothing about any woman, or any suit for divorce. Every attorney in this state knows I am—that I was—Granger's counsel, his personal counsel. If there had been anything like this I would have been told. It's

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preposterous! The papers would have been sent to me by the county clerk, even."

"COUNTY clerk's a rummy," said Riordan. "He don't know he's alive. Yuh come to me all in a sweat. Wanted to find Granger. Some legal matter, yuh said. Important. If it wasn't this divorce, what was it? Yuh tell us—it may help clear this thing up."

Rush turned his head at the words and looked at Riordan. Something moved behind him, he swung about; saw the ungainly and monstrous Halloran sag into a chair, which creaked under his weight.

"Get these men out of here," he snapped. "They have nothing to do with this. If we are to discuss my client's affairs, let us have—"

"Don't worry about those men, Rush," cut in Brady. "They hear more things every day than you could ever think of. Used to hearing things, and forgetting what they hear. What was Granger's trouble that you wanted to find him so badly?"

The attorney looked at the captain. "Brady, I resent your tone, your manner. You should know that the affairs of my client are privileged matter. I am here seeking information . . ."

"That's what we're all here for," interjected Riordan. "Don't yuh go climbin' on any high horse. This is a homicide we got—four homicides. Yuh're interested in one o' them. Yuh was so worried about Granger yuh slipped me twenty bucks to keep it quiet. Didn't want no notoriety, yuh said. Now come through with what yuh know!"

Rush lifted his head insolently. "Don't you talk to me like that—"

"Yuh talk to me, then!" snarled Riordan. "Yuh know somethin' about Granger. He's murdered. Yuh talk or I'll lock yuh up as an accessory after the fact!"

The attorney's lips curled in a sneer. He turned to Brady. "Captain, you'd better tell your man here something about the law. You'd better tell him something about civility."

Brady pursed his lips, rocked back and forth in his chair.

"Riordan's workin' with the coroner on this job, Mr. Rush. Chief's orders. At that, I think he's got a license to be sharp with you. If you know anything about Granger you'd better tell us."

"I know nothing about Granger, except what you tell me. And I do not believe half of that."

"Yuh lie," snapped Riordan. "Yuh knew Granger got tanked, an' when he sobered up he was married. He come to yuh to fix it. Yuh tol' him to hide out, an' yuh give the woman ten thousand dollars. Ten grand. An' she tricked yuh an' filed suit for divorce. Now quit tryin' to cover up, an' come through with the rest of it."

Rush gripped his cane so that the cords in his wrist stood out. His face paled, then flushed. Fire shot from his eyes as he looked at Riordan.

"Go on!" jeered the sergeant. "Start somethin'. See where yuh get. I can handle yuh, cane an' all, with one hand behind my back. Look—here is four men murdered; one has his head crushed in, three is stabbed, all the same way, all in the same place. At this warehouse. Yuh read about it in the papers, an' yuh get all excited about Granger, though his name ain't mentioned, an' yuh come to me. Why?"

Thaddeus Rush collected himself. He knew what was happening. These men were trying to stampede him. He

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had done the same thing, himself, hundreds of times, to some witness on the stand. Usually the witness had broken, had made some damaging admission. He knew the technique, recognized it. But now he was the witness—and it made a difference. Perhaps for the first time in his life he had some inkling of how the witness felt.

"I resent your manner, your tone, your words," he said. "You have no right to speak to me that way. However, we will let that pass for the present. You cannot stampede me, so do not try. Ask me what you want to know about Granger. If it is proper, I will tell you."

Riordan laughed shortly. "Nice speech, mister. Helps yuh get yuhr nerve back. All right—when did you see Granger last?"

"Several months ago. I do not remember the date."

"He come to yuhr office?"

"Yes."

"About suspectin' he'd been married while he was drunk?"

"I'd like to know how you found that out!"

"By diggin', mister. Why did yuh send this shyster Bowles down here to get Larson, the watchman at the warehouse, sprung, after yuh read in the paper he was pinched?"

Rush saw it again, and recognized it: the sudden shift in the subject of inquiry. It confused the witness. It confused him.

"I am not aware that I employed Mr. Bowles—"

"Skip it," barked Riordan. "Yuh sent him. We got that. Bowles is dead, so we can't use it. I know jus' as much law as yuh do. Did yuh know this man Larson, the watchman? Think it over before yuh answer—it may be what yuh call a 'surprise question'."

Rush smiled thinly. "Larson is dead, Sergeant."

"Good for yuh. Yuh know the law, too. But Larson was in the county jail for some time before he died, an' for all yuh know he may have made a statement—an' signed it, before witnesses. Which would make it relevant. Did yuh know this man Larson?"

Thaddus Rush looked down at the floor. He recalled various things he had read in the papers about this man Riordan. The papers had said Riordan was clever. Rush had a rather unflattering opinion of all police, but perhaps he had been mistaken. He raised his eyes to the sergeant's.

"Let us get out in the open," he said. "It is late—near my bedtime. Let us stop ghost-dancing around, Sergeant. What is it that you are after?"

"I'm after you, mister. Here is four homicides. Fancy homicides, yuh might say. We dig into 'em. Everythin' we turn up leads to Thaddeus Rush. What I want to know is where yuh come in, an' why."

THADDEUS RUSH, noted attorney, suddenly remembered something. The way to beat a case, when it was going against you, was to surprise the other side. Dumfound them. Give them something they didn't even suspect—and in the confusion retreat to a new line of defense. He smiled, leaned forward.

"Mr. Granger, Sergeant, was a peculiar man. His one interest in life was money. He never missed an opportunity to get money. Some six months or so ago a man came to him, a doctor, and requested a loan. The doctor had been experimenting to such an extent that he had neglected his practice. His experiments concerned embalming the human body.

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"You have heard about Lenin, Sergeant? How his body was embalmed by a new process, so that it was perfectly preserved and has been for the past ten years on display, you might say, for the populace to worship? Well, this doctor was working on the same idea—or a similar idea. He had invented an embalming fluid which would permeate all tissue, and quickly harden. He just about had his method completed, when he ran out of money.

"He went to Granger to get enough financial assistance to complete his work. Granger saw the monetary possibilities. If bodies could be so embalmed, if the secret could be kept under control—Granger's control, you understand—Granger would have a gold mine. Do you see? He could get a royalty from every undertaker in the world. So Granger and the doctor drew up a contract, and Granger loaned the doctor money."

Thaddeus Rush paused, looked about the room. He saw he had the attention of everybody.

"It was necessary," he continued, "that the doctor have a place to work. His previous experimentation had been done on small animals, rabbits, cats, mice, and so on. It was at Granger's suggestion that the doctor obtained use of this loft at the warehouse.

"There had to be a blind for that, of course, so the story of the broken-down display of stuffed animals was invented. Within the hollow forms of the animals there was taken into the warehouse loft such materials as the doctor needed—instruments, utensils, chemicals; even the body of a pauper—a human cadaver, turned over to the doctor by the medical school for experimental purposes. The body of a tramp, who had been killed on the railroad, and never identified. It is supposed the man fell from a freight train, and fractured his skull. Your office, Dr. Wilson, should have a record of that case, and if you will inquire at the medical school you will doubtless be able to find a record of the surrender of this cadaver to the doctor.

"The work was done at night. The watchman, Larson, knew the doctor as Joel Kermit, supposed to be the owner of the stored animals. Kermit—the doctor—represented himself to the watchman as being destitute, with no place to stay. For small tips—fifty cents every now and then—the watchman permitted the doctor to go into the loft at night. He supposed the man was sleeping there, among his animals. Of course the watchman knew nothing about the cadaver—the pauper with the fractured skull.

"The experiment was completed. The body was embalmed. The method, it appeared, was a success. The tissues were perfectly preserved—"

"Rest your voice a minute," interrupted Riordan. "Yuh're tellin' such a good story I don't want yuh to get tired an' spoil it." He turned to the coroner. "Doc, see can yuh get the head o' the medical school on the phone, an' see is this stuff about gettin' a human body true. I know they do things like that, sometimes."

Thaddeus Rush drew a long breath, changed his position in his chair. He was much pleased at this proof of interest. Dr. Wilson was busy at the telephone, speaking over it in a voice so subdued that the others in the room could not hear his words. Presently he hung up.

"I got Dr. Morgan," he said. "He is professor of anatomy at the medical school. He says yes, a cadaver was delivered to a surgeon for experimental purposes; he recalls it was the body of

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a man sent in from the morgue with a fractured skull. He said it was rather unusual, but that in this case it was done because the doctor's request was backed by letters from Peter Granger and Thaddeus Rush, well-known and prominent citizens."

CHAPTER VII

Riordan's Trap

RIORDAN slapped his thigh, laughed. He looked at the attorney. "Ain't it funny," he exclaimed. "Here yuh tell the truth—or some of it—an' it jumps up an' kicks yuh in the face! Well, well—an' why would yuh be writin' to the medical school to ask please could this doctor have a body to pump full o' embalming fluid? Yuh must ha' been interested. Yuh must ha' known all about it. That bein' the case, when the papers tol' about this find o' bodies in the warehouse, why didn't yuh come to the front an' tell what yuh knew?"

Rush frowned, plainly displeased at the way things had gone. "I wrote to the medical school," he said, "because Granger, my client, was interested in this experiment. As I have told you . . ."

"Never mind what yuh told," cut in Riordan. "Take it as it lays: yuh an' Granger an' the doctor was all in on this. One o' the bodies we found was this blanket-stiff who fell off a train—the man with the fractured skull. Granger we got identified. Yuh alibi out for the man with the busted skull. *But who were the other two?*"

Rush twisted in his seat slightly, as if trying to avoid an impalpable something which he felt closing in. "One of them was Dr. Slaven, the man the watchman knew as Kermit. It was an accident. This fluid used to preserve the tissues—was deadly poisonous. Slaven accidentally scratched himself—"

"Skip the details," interrupted Riordan. "We got three now: the busted head, Granger an' this doc. How come the fourth? Yuh must know, since yuh know all the rest."

The attorney swallowed. "Another accident," he said. "I do not know just how. Slaven told me it was an accident. The man was somebody he had picked up somewhere, as an assistant. Slaven said he was careless, got poisoned. I may say to you, Sergeant, that you have been wrong about this. The men were not stabbed. The wound in the back that gave you that impression was where the syringe with the preserving fluid was inserted, do you see?"

Riordan nodded. "Mr. Rush, I believe yuh—believe every word. I believe yuh because I know yuh was there an' saw a lot o' this funny work. If yuh hadn't seen it yuhrself, yuh never could make up a yarn for an alibi. Yuh had personal knowledge of it. I suppose yuh was sort o' watchdog for Granger, eh? Watchin' these experiments to see the doctor didn't work in any ringers or fraud. Was it like that?"

Thaddeus Rush looked at Riordan for a long time. He studied the sergeant's moonlike and bland face, gazed into his inscrutable eyes. Finally he nodded.

"I—I saw—I kept track of some of the experiments, the work," he said. "Mr. Granger relied on me—to—to protect him."

Riordan nodded again. "Then yuh lied like a clock at the start," he said, his voice not changing its tone at all. "Yuh lied when yuh said the watchman let this guy in there once in awhile

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for fifty-cent tips, to sleep. What really happened was yuh had the watchman on yuhr pay-roll; yuh was down there yuhrself, this doctor was there, this helper o' his was there. Yuh had two, three men to the warehouse every night; an' was payin' the watchman to keep his mouth shut. Payin' him plenty. Which, I suppose, is why yuh wanted to get him sprung when he was in the county jail. Yuh was afraid he'd belch an' spill all the beans. Is that it?"

Rush shrugged his shoulders. "You seem to know."

Riordan smiled grimly. "An' the watchman hung hisself in the jail because he was afraid o' yuh. Afraid that you, to save yuhr own face, would say he was responsible for these bodies we found. The watchman would know that his word against yuhrs wouldn't be worth a damn. So he hung hisself. Yuh're a murderer!"

Rush's head jerked up. "I have killed nobody!" he shouted. "The watchman's conscience bothered him. He knew he had betrayed his trust. He was—afraid."

"Who killed Granger?" demanded Riordan.

"Nobody. I know nothing about Granger. I think you have lied to me about Granger. I do not believe he is dead or that you have his body at the morgue. Or that there is a divorce plea filed. I know nothing about Granger. That is why I came to you—to find out."

"Yuh killed Granger," said Riordan, flatly. "Yuh saw yuhr chance. After Granger was in this body-snatchin' game, thinkin' to make money out o' undertakers, he gets himself tanked an' tangled with this woman. He come to yuh to get him loose from the woman, an' yuh saw yuhr chance. You got him down to this hell-hole yuh had in the warehouse, an' yuh killed him, an' stuffed him in the woman's trunk. So she'd find him. That would shut her mouth—she'd be afraid o' bein' charged with murder. Granger had no kin. Yuh was his attorney. Yuh'd be named administrator o' the estate. Soft for yuh. So yuh killed him. I can prove it!"

Rush leaped to his feet, stood trembling in front of his chair. "You can't prove it!" he shouted. "Granger wasn't killed—there's not a mark on his body. He died—"

"AH," said Riordan, softly. At the sound of his voice, Rush's tirade stopped abruptly, with his mouth hanging open. For an instant he stood there, motionless, then his eyes swept about the room, with the circle of men leaning toward him, listening. In a flash his right hand and arm swept upward. Before anybody could move the cane he had been holding flashed aloft and shattered the electrolier in the center of the ceiling of the small office, plunging the chamber into darkness.

As the fragments of the glass globes and reflector tinkled downward there was a sudden scraping and the stamping thunder of feet. The darkness was filled with swirling motion.

"The door—beat him to the door," shouted Captain Brady. The scuffling of feet swept backward in the darkness. There were grunts, the sound of hearty blows being hammered against soft flesh; the ripping sound of splitting and tearing cloth; the sharp crashes of overturned chairs. Brisk interjections of pain and rage burst out, punctuated by the slap of fisticuffs and vivid streaks of profanity uttered by labored breaths.

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Muffled noise of a titanic struggle filled the dark room. Above this there began a regular, rhythmic thumping as if some distant pile driver was thudding its weight down against a spile grounded on bedrock. All the other sounds lessened; only the *thump, thump, thump* of some mighty and eerie hammer could be heard. Then came a final thump—harsher, louder than all others—and the office door crashed outwards.

Detectives and the civil clerk, who had been in the outer office, had leaped to their feet and rushed forward when the first muffled noises came from behind the closed door of the executive room. At the door they stood—afraid to enter, knowing better than to go away. Their eyes were fixed on the panels of the portal, and when these crashed outward, splintered down the center, they saw a strange thing.

As the door split asunder, there hurtled through it a huge, misshapen and unrecognizable form. The great mass, draped in torn clothes, tottered forward and fell upon the ruins of the door. One of the sleuths pulled it forward, turned it over; gasped as he recognized the ruddy and battered features, the bruised face of Inspector Halloran. He was dragged to one side, and those before the door then gazed into the inner office.

In the oblong of light admitted from the larger room was a pile of twitching figures, snarled about with shredded clothes. Here and there bleeding or pulpy flesh was revealed in a small, pinkish-red spot. Behind the pile of figures, looming like some god of the underworld, was Detective Sergeant Riordan, sitting rigid, leaning forward in his chair, eyes staring—seeming a pagan idol erected over a mound of sacrifice.

"WELL, yuh mutton-heads," said the idol, harshly, "pull em apart an' see who's dead. They all rush to the door to block it, an' each one thought the other guy was tryin' to get out. Some battle—a lot o' hard dicks beatin' each other up."

The voice brought the onlookers back to reality. They began to paw the pile; which, in turn, began to squirm. One by one they were lifted or helped up—disheveled, battered, shame-faced. Captain Brady, Coroner Wilson, young Willis and a ragged man with shredded clothes, bleeding face and missing teeth, was hauled aside.

"Cuff up that last guy," barked Riordan. "The one shedding teeth. That's Rush, the lawyer. I want him for murder. A fine place he got hisself into—under the heels o' a stampede o' bulls."

Captain Brady, staring at his ruined clothes, and feeling tenderly of a puffed cheek, shook himself.

"You can't charge him with murder, boy," he said.

"The hell I can't!" answered Riordan. "What yuh think I been doin'? Just sittin' here, to keep out o' the ruckus? I been usin' my head. Can't yuh see what he done? He knows about this hocus-pocus down to the warehouse, about these embalmed stiffs, about the animals they'd took in. He sees his chance an' wants to get rid o' Granger an' the woman. So what does he do?

"He fixes up that joint like we saw it—the guy lyin' in the crocodile's mouth, the guy under the tiger's paw, the guy the lion was jumpin' on. Fixes 'em up—an' then he takes Granger down there. Tells him, likely, he wants to show him how fine the experiment has worked out. He opens the door, pushes Granger in, turns on the lights.

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"What happens? Granger sees what we saw when we bust in there. Horror upon horror, wild beasts eatin' men, it looks like. Granger is a old man, with a alcohol heart an' the spirit of a rabbit. He just drops dead—scared to death. That sight would kill many a better guy than old Granger. It give me an' Doc plenty turn when we first got into it. So Rush has Granger dead. He has the world by the tail—all but the woman. So he goes in, pumps Granger full o' this fluid, shoves him in the woman's trunk for her to find. He knows the sight of the corpse will stop her.

"Then he goes away, waits for it to break. He's all set. But it don't break the way he wants it to. We keep still about the trunk; we let the papers in on the rest of it. Rush has got to have Granger found, or his plan is no good. The only person interested in plantin' Granger in the trunk, an' in havin' Granger found in the trunk, is Rush. So he tries to break it. He even comes to me, to get it broke official. He killed Granger—scared him to death.

"A clever job—it would take a clever lawyer to think it up. If he was found out, maybe he could pull a legal trick an' claim scarin' a man to death wasn't murder. I don't know—that'll be up to the D.A. But he killed Granger. I'm goin' to book him for murder!"

Coroner Wilson limped over to the still figure yet lying on the floor, bent over it, thrust his hand inside the ripped and frayed clothes; looked up at Riordan.

"No, Sarge," he said, "you won't book him. He's all through. Either he got jammed up on the floor there, under us, or the ruckus scared him to death, too. He's gone to a higher court, Sarge—but I guess you made the case at that."

Next Week—

Mardi Gras Murder

A Morton and McGarvey Novelette by

DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

Death stalks through the gay carnival crowds of New Orleans, and McGarvey, perched on a float for the masked crowds to see and cheer, waits for a hidden killer to open fire! Don't miss this thrilling action-mystery.

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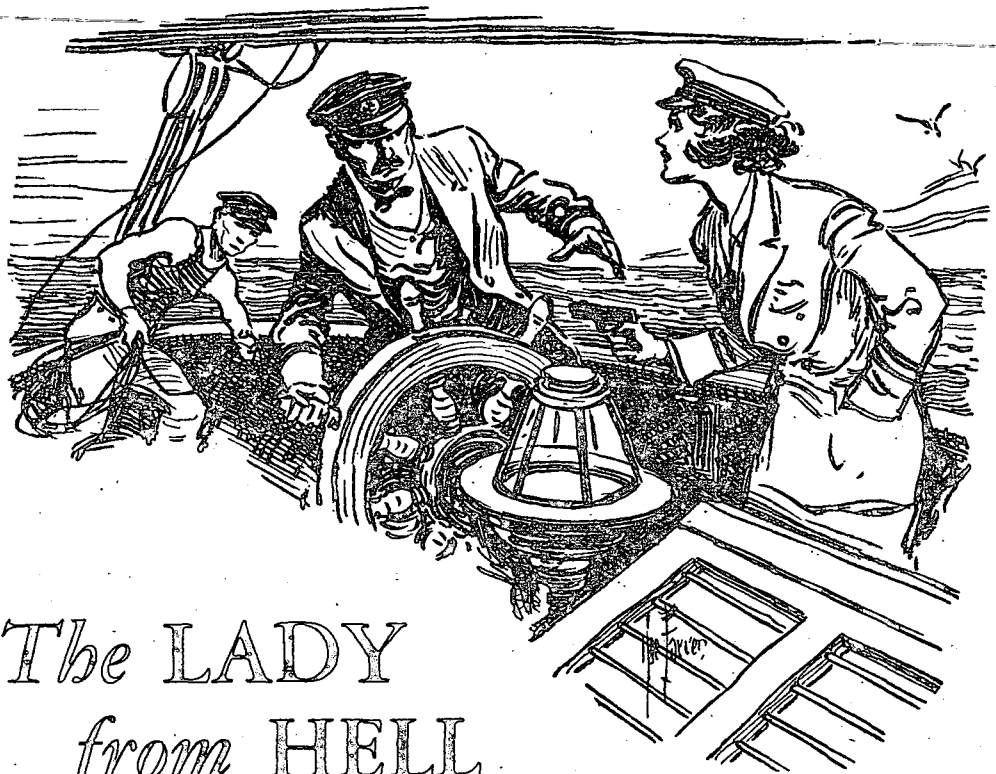

Vivian Legrand lifted the gun

The LADY from HELL

The Adventure of the Cayenne Fugitives

A True Story by

Eugene Thomas

They Were Five Desperate Men in an Open Boat Drifting across the Tropic Sea—into the Clutches of the Arch-Villainess, Vivian Legrand

CHAPTER I

The Dangerous Fugitive

THE Lady from Hell wasn't looking for trouble, and did not guess that she was finding it. She swept the horizon with powerful binoculars, focussing momentarily on a distant, as yet indistinguishable speck on the water and then continued to gaze until she had described a casual arc. Her eyes, as they came to rest again on Adrian Wylie, seated in the stern of the boat, were thoughtful.

"Today," she said, "is the fourteenth."

Wylie was fishing. He glanced up with a smile.

"And tomorrow," he observed, "will be the fifteenth."

Vivian Legrand did not smile. "Things happen to me on the fourteenth," she said seriously. "It was the fourteenth of September when I walked into that house on the Plaza Goiti in Manila—the house of the

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Mandarin Hoang Fi Tu—and met you for the first time. It was the fourteenth when I first met Sir Mark Caywood in Burma. It was the fourteenth when we first collided with Vedova Bey—"

She raised her binoculars again, watching the distant, blurred speck bobbing upon the sea which was moving with a leaden, sultry calm in which there seemed a lifeless and sinister oppression. Wylie watched her, his own face thoughtful. Although she was in the shadow of the awning overhead, an aura of brilliance from the shimmering sea silhouetted her delicate, exotic face; her curved red lips, the wind-stirred crest of her red hair.

He had a great deal of respect for the intuitive powers of this forceful woman who had been the guiding genius in all of their criminal activities, and it was quite evident that something was troubling her now. A scent of trouble. It hung in the heavy, overheated air. It seemed to breathe an uncertainty into her actions. It was nothing—but he could see that it had infected her with an unnatural tension, a psychic awareness of impending evil.

Vivian Legrand, whom the underworld of three continents had nicknamed The Lady from Hell because of her daring exploits, was on a vacation from her career of crime. With Adrian Wylie, her chief of staff and companion in all her schemes, she had sailed from London. Havana, through chance, had brought a considerable amount of money to swell the bank account of the two criminals, and in Port au Prince a week before the two had blackmailed a planter of his sugar plantation and resold it to the sugar trust. Now, they were cruising among the lower islands on a yacht they had chartered.

"Is it just the fact that today is the fourteenth, Vivian," Wylie queried, "or is there something else in the wind?"

She shrugged and raised her glasses again.

"I don't know," she confessed.

Her glasses were riveted now on that queer horizon dot, which had gradually come within range of her strong lenses.

She saw a peculiar sort of boat, with a small, ragged sail. There were men in the boat—she counted three—but even as she watched one of the figures slumped down out of sight. Only two huddled forms to be seen. Then but a lone man. . . .

The little craft had no cabin or deck and no cover of any description. The men, as she coolly studied them, appeared to be dying.

FOR seventy-two hours past the fugitives in the dugout canoe had scarcely dared to change position. They were cramped and numb and miserable. But in that time, so it seemed, they had voyaged a long, long way. From a world of concentrated horror to a world of vague despair.

They had been all but overwhelmed by two terrific thunderstorms. They had skirted treacherous mud banks, survived whirling currents and heat and hurricane gusts. Lately they had not dared to steer toward shore to land and forage and obtain fresh water, because of suspected pursuit and quicksands as well as habitations known to be hostile. Sailing onward almost helplessly, without prayer or a compass, they had come to the final hazards of the surging tropic sea. They were becalmed.

The wind which had braced them and swept them madly along had died down to a fitful breeze, capricious as

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their own turbulent destiny. It flirted with them for a while, puffed them ahead, then retarded them, winning the applause or bracing the abuse of criminals condemned for life and fluently profane in five languages.

Waves slapped the sides of their clumsy little craft, drenching them with spray. When they had to bail they used the tin food basins which were not so much dread reminders of the prison from which they fled as painful reminders of their own overmastering hunger and thirst. The water jars empty half a day! The last of the fruit and frugal supplies eaten hours ago!

They were feverish with longing for drink, for food and unstirring sleep. They were sick with anxiety, tortured by hope, feeble from days of fugitive ordeal.

The canoe that held them was a roughly carpentered log some eighteen feet in length, with strips of *moca-moca*—a much lighter wood, buoyant as cork—lashed on either side. There was a crudely improvised rudder and keel to it, and a stumpy mast with a draggled, lateen-rigged sail. And in this curious blend of coffin and argosy they tossed beneath a blistering sun.

There were five men in the boat, one of whom was bound and gagged in the bow. The four escapers looked much alike; scorched, bearded, cruelly emaciated. And they were equally uniform in their fierce resolve to get beyond the reach of French law. They wore grimy white blouses and cotton trousers. On their backs were stenciled numbers. Three of them had wide-crowned, flat-brimmed limp straw hats. The fourth had his head bandaged with a piece of cotton cloth, soiled and stained with blood.

The man aft, who steered and seemed the least inert, was Tristan Malliard, a notorious murderer.

Suddenly he raised a sun cracked hand.

"There," he croaked. "Land! Land!"

"Again?" One of them spoke as the others strained bloodshot eyes to see the dim line at which Malliard was pointing. "Not Surinam or Demerara?"

There was no relief awaiting them in Dutch or British Guiana. Fugitives from Cayenne were taken in those neighboring colonies by whites and blacks alike—returned to the convict cantonments at two hundred francs a head.

"Trinidad, I think—or perhaps Tobago," Malliard responded. "We're far off the mainland. A low flat coast, Courelle always described it. And he should know. They dragged him back from Trinidad."

"But Tristan," one of the others said slowly, "the English, they were different there today."

"Yes," their leader responded. "We will be safe there—if they have not heard of the escape."

"But what about him?"

Lerulot, anarchist and would-be assassin of a premier of France, pointed to the tumbled heap of rags, sail cloth and rope which covered their prisoner.

Most Cayenne prison breaks are furtive affairs in which the convicts await an unguarded moment and steal away from one of the labor camps, making for a river or a jungle retreat. But Malliard and his comrades, originally seven in number, made their dash for freedom as part of a minor convict uprising. Two warders and a convict had been killed. The shrewd leadership of Malliard had directed that they protect their flight, if possible, with a

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hostage. And largely by chance they had been able to seize the man they hated most.

The reputation of Pedro de Martinque is still seared in the minds of decent residents of French Guiana. No convict, young or old, who had the misfortune to have him as a warder, ever forgets what terror he was able to inspire in the bravest convict. His name was really not Martinque. It was Pedro de Gorot. But, because he had come from Martinque, where his brother lived, he had been given the nickname by the convicts.

Now bound and helpless, gagged most of the time, until his lips and tongue had become so swollen that it did not matter, this hated chief warder of the road building camp whence Malliard and the others had fled, lay in the bow of the boat, blistered, practically insensible—and yet refusing to die.

So long as they feared pursuers overtaking them, the fugitives counted upon the presence of their captive to save them from being killed upon the spot—their canoe riddled by rifle fire and allowed to sink under them in a shark-infested sea! But now land, distinctly visible, made the situation different.

PEDRO DE MARTINQUE, as a hostage or a corpse, was a dangerous liability. He must be tossed overboard.

Urged on by the vindictive Lerulot, they tried to lift him and dump him over the side. But they had all become too weak. Groaning, cursing and heaving, they nearly capsized their craft. It was no use.

Pedro hung about their necks like a millstone. When they could afford to abandon the canoe, they might dispose of him—but not before.

The exertions of their attempt only weakened them all the more. And the rough handling given the man seemed to revive him. He looked up at them for a moment, and it seemed that his glance was mocking. Actually he was too close to madness to have any rational thought. But he had mocked and tormented them so often. Lerulot, cursing, struck the warder feebly.

There was still that sultry calm, and the canoe was making no headway under a sky into which a faint yellow glaze had crept; a glaze that was almost the color of sulphur. Yet with land in sight, inspiring their hopes again, the four convicts decided to paddle toward the haven. And here again strength failed them.

In bitter realization of their exhausted state they had just stopped paddling when Vivian Legrand first saw their craft.

Dropping her glasses, Vivian gave a swift curt order to the master of the *Esmeralda*. Wylie looked up quickly, then got to his feet and came to her side. He gazed long through her glasses and then turned to her.

"Better be careful, Vivian, there's something queer about that boat."

"I know," she responded. "But this is the fourteenth!"

"There's no profit in a canoe filled with dead or dying men," he argued. "It's obviously not a ship's boat. No chance of it being the millionaire owner of a wrecked yacht."

She raised her glasses again. The *Esmeralda* was close enough now to the dugout canoe for her to see clearly the slack forms of its castaway crew.

She gave a little exclamation. "They are escaped convicts, Doc," she said. "Probably from Cayenne. The one on the bow has a number stenciled on the back of his blouse. There is profit

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in convicts," she added, her tone reminiscent. "There was profit in Stavinsky, you remember."

"Stavinsky was a secret service man whom we rescued from a penal colony," Wylie reminded her. "I don't like the smell of this." There was uneasiness in his voice.

"I always like the smell of profits," The Lady from Hell said crisply. "Besides, don't forget it's the fourteenth."

She turned to issue sharp orders to Matteo and his sons, who manned the *Esmeralda.* In a few minutes five limp forms were lifted from the wallowing canoe and laid beneath the awning on the after deck. The canoe was turned adrift again.

Wylie, assisted by Matteo, worked over the five they had curiously rescued. It was Tristan Malliard who first opened his eyes, tried to sit up and could not. Only by terrific exertion of will was he able to force a few words through swollen lips.

"Water," was the only word they could distinguish.

Pedro de Martinque revived next. But there were only his bloodshot eyes to report upon his flickering consciousness. His tongue and lips were too swollen to permit an articulate sound.

LATER in the day the five had partially recovered. Malliard and Brune were quiet, seemingly content to enjoy whatever brief blessings of fortune came their way. Their comrade, Despard, was weak and ill, having less than a fifty-fifty chance, Wylie said, to pull through. Lerulot, perhaps because he had been most intellectually active, was quite out of his head. The sun had boiled that fiery and fanatic brain to a tempest of delirium. Wylie improvised a straitjacket of rope and canvas.

Pedro de Martinque lay silent, watchful, apparently wondering to find himself still among the living.

Lerulot grew calmer, and by pleading murmurs and rolling of the eyes, implored them to release him from his bonds.

"Go ahead—let him loose. He's had shackles enough in his time," Vivian said.

"But the delirium will return," Wylie protested.

"Take a chance on that," she said.

Of course it did return just at dusk. Raving and gesticulating, the man who had fixed his mind on escape from Cayenne madly struggled with Matteo and one of his sons, easily brushed Wylie aside, leaped to the rail and plunged overboard with a hideous yell.

Matteo signalled to come about with the yacht, which was cruising at only five knots, using her engine. There was no wind for the sails, and the sea was long, oily rollers that seemed to have taken on something of the yellow tint of the sky.

"Who is he, that delirious one?" Vivian bent over Tristan Malliard to ask in French.

"Andre Lerulot, the great anarchist. A lifer at Cayenne. He shot and badly wounded Premier Phillippe—"

"The man is a fool. It is good riddance," she turned and crisply shouted an order to Matteo.

"But he is swimming—I can see him plainly, *Señora* Legrand," protested the master of the yacht. "A sudden plunge into the water has cleared his head. We can put about and pick him up with ease in this light—"

"Let him swim." Her voice held the ring of steel.

"But *Señora,* I cannot," Matteo protested. "It would be murder." He

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turned and shouted an order to one of his sons.

"I wouldn't, Matteo," The Lady from Hell said smoothly. Something in her tone made him turn to glance at her. The tiny but deadly little gun that she was rarely without had appeared in her hand as if from the empty air, and was covering him. "If your son tosses Lerulot a rope . . ." she said significantly, and lifted the gun just the slightest fraction.

The man stared at her. "You wish him to die?" he queried slowly.

"He has chosen," The Lady from Hell said crisply. "Let him swim. If he reaches land, so much the better for him."

"Yes, *Señora,*" Matteo said. He turned away with a helpless shrug and shot a swift order at his son. The coil of rope was dropped to the deck again, and the boat drew away from the struggling man.

"An anarchist," The Lady from Hell said to Wylie. There was in her manner, her voice, not the slightest shadow of the callous thing she had just done. "I want nothing to do with politics—and fanatics of his sort are especially bad. Give that Lerulot two days of good treatment on board, and we'd have had a trouble-maker to deal with."

"So you figure the others as gentle as lambs?" Wylie smiled.

"I can handle the others," Vivian assured him confidently.

CHAPTER II

A Floating Fortune

MURDER, unlike some other crimes, does not necessarily put its mark upon those who have been fated to kill a fellow being. And later that day Tristan Malliard, shaved and bathed and decently dressed, proved to be a decidedly presentable, if worn and emaciated, young man.

He had belonged to a gang responsible for the death of several French policemen. Tristan's youth had seemed to his judges a mitigating circumstance, and at sixteen he had been saved from the chopper, while being condemned to the "dry guillotine" of Guiana for the rest of his life. Tristan was now twenty-nine, with a keenness and quality of leadership that showed what first rate material had gone to waste when the slums enlisted him with the most reckless *apache* gang of Paris.

Late that afternoon, briefly and modestly, without carping affectations of reform or remorse, he told his own story. Brune, he continued, had been a robber. Despard, whose life was still in danger, had been a pal of Brune's. Their depradations in Marseilles had been a nine days' wonder. But at length the police cordon—the Assizes—and a sentence of transportation, carrying life exile from their native France.

Malliard tactfully passed over the career of the lost Andre Lerulot.

"We are, I'm afraid, unable to thank you or repay you," he went on. "Even if you choose to return us to Cayenne and collect a triple reward, we are worth 'on the hoof' precisely two hundred francs each."

"That's a lie," Pedro broke in. "Thousands of francs reward will be offered for them. If you had not let Lerulot drown, at least ten thousand would have been collected on him alone."

Vivian turned quickly to Malliard before Pedro could continue. "Tell me, why did you choose to carry Pedro alive through waters thick with hungry

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sharks? Why didn't you get rid of him?"

He told her of their ultimate attempt to rid themselves of their hostage, and how all the puny strength they could exert was not enough to tip him out without overturning the dugout canoe. He finished with:

"Pedro was chief overseer at the road building camp near Kou-Rou. His cruelties were endless. He would bury a man in sand to his chin, and let ants crawl into his mouth, ears and eyes. He was a killer only by accident. He preferred that the convicts should live to be disciplined by his tortures. He would even steal their food and clothes and sell them."

"You lie!" Pedro cried out.

Vivian stared hard at the snarling warder from Cayenne. "I believe you," she said to Malliard. Then she turned to Pedro. "Let's get this straight. You were, I understand, a thief—in league with bigger thieves. That means you know where money is hidden. You can afford to ransom yourself. You two," she turned to Malliard and Brune, "are not beaten. You are free. There's life in you. Think, consider your situation—tell me how we may turn your being pursued to account?"

"And if we can't think so quickly—if the sun has cooked what brains we ever had?" Malliard queried.

"Then, when a patrol boat sights us and hails us, perhaps I may have no ideas either. Get busy and think of some way to pay your passage, my friends, or I'll have to give you up."

Pedro smirked and quite audibly chuckled.

The Lady from Hell turned on him. "As for you—if we are chased by a patrol boat, start in praying. I know your kind of prison bully. There's no reward being posted for your return to Cayenne, I'll bet on that. And I don't think you ever will return—a dose of salt water will cure all your ailments."

THE *Esmeralda* with its ill-assorted human freight sailed on, and was now on the course of larger vessels bound to or from Brazilian ports.

Tristan Malliard approached Vivian Legrand, and spoke in an even, half-apologetic tone.

"We can think of no way of paying you," he confessed. "And you had better toss us overboard soon, Madame—the three of us—and Pedro."

"Why?" Vivian snapped.

"I'm afraid the pursuit is on," he said simply.

Vivian wheeled and stared off in the direction that he indicated. Sure enough, a distant smudge of smoke on the horizon revealed the approach of a vessel apparently traveling at full speed. The Lady from Hell brought her powerful binoculars to bear upon it, and could make out a slim, rakish white craft that might very well be a French gunboat.

She handed Malliard the glasses and watched him studying the oncoming ship. His hands were steady; his nonchalance was a quality she admired.

"I suspect we're in for it," he said. "Luck's against us—"

"It's odd they'd overlook you those days you were drifting or becalmed in that rotten log, but now find you when you get aboard this yacht."

"The answer is, Madame Legrand, your power yacht has not drifted but cut squarely across a ship lane. And the question is—what are you going to do?"

Vivian's eyes sparkled. "I'm not

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going to throw a valuable cargo overboard. Whoever it is, we'll fool 'em. Call Brune."

Wylie did not object to her latest whim, for a warning beacon of fire blazed in her eyes. She was absorbed in her plot, and meant to see it through.

Matteo and his sons she cowed and suppressed. Pedro de Martinque she ordered bound and gagged, and saw to it herself that the bonds cut savagely and the gag was secure and cruel. Brune and Malliard she disguised with deft, sure strokes—one a master of the *Esmeralda,* clad in a yachting outfit borrowed from Wylie—the other a guest, with Wylie again the outfitter.

Presently all was arranged as she had planned it, and the *Esmeralda* was shipshape, ready for an encounter with the French naval craft.

Wylie trained his glass upon it. "Say—" He stared hard again, then whistled softly. "Maybe you win after all, Vi."

"What is it?" she said quickly.

"That's no French gunboat—hell, I ought to have known it first glance. Look at the slope of her stack and those rakish masts. Has wireless—everything up to date. Vi, my dear, unless there's two of them, that's the *Iroquois*—finest pleasure craft afloat, the latest toy of Myron T. Granville, magnate of steel, magnate of oil, magnate—"

Vivian had heard enough. "Stop the engine," she ordered.

"Good Lord, why? That yacht's making eighteen knots. She'll overhaul us fast enough."

"But we're in distress, Doc. Off our course—drifting—a lady in distress, small crew, one guest. Malliard—no, come to think of it, he'll have to switch to the crew with Brune. Can your wardrobe manage it?"

"If you say so, it'll have to. What'll all this make me, a tattooed man?"

"No, you'll be on your dignity. Get busy — gray hair, eyeglasses, wide black ribbon and all the rest of it. With your South'n Kunnel accent, Adrian. You're playing my father."

He consented, laughing. "And with just what object in view?" he said

"The rich, majestic Mr. Myron T. Granville."

"Suppose he's not aboard, after all this planning?"

Vivian waved the suggestion aside. "I'm playing a hunch. Myron will be aboard. Else why would that gorgeous floating mansion be churning through these waters?"

"And our being in distress," said Wylie as the *Esmeralda* lost headway and began to drift, "you think it will win us an invitation aboard the *Iroquois?* They say Granville's worth a cool hundred million. And I've heard he's susceptible to beautiful women."

She flashed him a dazzling smile.

THE splendid *Iroquois* steamed up alongside of the bobbing little *Esmeralda* with a long halyard of bright signal flags whipping in the breeze. Wylie was able to interpret the code message.

"Asks us if we need help."

"Tell him yes."

The two vessels were now close enough for a hail. Wylie, who had deftly added twenty years to his age and an austere dignity to his manner, cupped his hands and called an answer across the water.

In no time a small boat, smartly manned by four seamen in immaculate uniforms, put off from the *Iroquois.* It was a Vivian Legrand of untold enchantment and charm who presently received the florid, robust Granville.

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"My daughter, suh — Mrs. Legrand," said Wylie, having introduced himself as "Colonel Mortimer Wylie." He assured the multi-millionaire that it was "an honor, suh, a great honor" to have so famous a compatriot come to their aid.

"Lucky I sighted you," Granville boomed. "My old tub"—he gestured toward the shining *Iroquois* as though he'd found it abandoned on some American inland canal—"my old tub there has wireless, just like the newest liners. And my operator picked up a call in French. Speak French like a native, myself. I translated it. And it means danger—serious danger for a boat the size of this one. The French are warning all ships to be on the lookout for a dangerous band of criminals—"

"Criminals, suh?" Wylie gasped. "On the high seas!"

Vivian spoke gently. "Do you mean pirates, Mr. Granville?"

"Ma'am, I mean French convicts—escaped from that hell hole"—he stopped short and apologized to The Lady from Hell—"that penal colony at Cayenne."

"They were heading this way, suh?" Wylie exclaimed with dignified dismay.

"That's just it, nobody knows where they're heading, Colonel. But they've got a boat they stole—" Vivian gasped.

Granville turned toward her, his voice softened. "Very sorry to frighten you like this, Mrs. Legrand," he said, "but it's best you folks should be on your guard. Having no wireless—"

"I am not frightened, Mr. Granville," said Vivian. "Not a bit frightened while your great ship is near. It's so superb, so perfect—like a man-of-war. What could harm it?"

"Right you are," the millionaire boomed proudly. "We rode out a hurricane in the West Indies. And rather than stand here, may I not have the honor of your company at dinner? I'll send my second engineer over to you, meanwhile, and he'll have your motor going before we get to coffee and liqueurs."

"Most hospitable, suh," Wylie replied, waiting for Vivian to give him his cue.

"I'm afraid our accident is worse than engine trouble, Mr. Granville," she put in quickly. "We seem to have struck a floating log and sheared off a propeller blade. Very difficult to repair, our mate says." Her small, graceful gesture indicated Malliard, standing at a respectful distance, as the mate.

"Propeller, eh? Can't be fixed this side of a dockyard. Well," said Granville, now completely subjugated, "I guess your trouble's my good fortune. You, Colonel, and your daughter are my guests. The *Iroquois* 'll take you in tow. Speed's no object at present."

He returned Vivian's electrifying smile with interest. "In fact, speaking as a lonely widower, just cruising about and bored to death—I won't mind how long it takes to get you safe to port."

CHAPTER III

Million Dollar Intrigue

MALLIARD sought the first opportunity to speak with Vivian alone. "I have been long shut away, Madame. But I still have an eye for men. That Granville is no fool, beware of him."

"I'm not underestimating him. He understands French. Nobody else on board does, according to him. Make an excuse to address him in French,

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Tristan. He'll want you with us. And I shall need you with us."

"Command me," Malliard said quickly.

"When I need you most, be sure you are ready for anything, Tristan," she said earnestly. "And meanwhile, we can't risk them catching me in a lie about the *Esmeralda,* can we? Matteo mustn't know. See that the *Esmeralda's* propeller is really damaged. Be sure Brune watches over Pedro. Say nothing of what you do to anyone."

Granville suddenly came in sight along the deck. It was time to return to the *Iroquois.* Malliard saluted Vivian respectfully

THE vivacity of The Lady from Hell at dinner stirred Wylie's admiration even as it obviously quickened the pulse beat of Myron T. Granville. None could have imagined, observing her, that she was virtually in a trap of her own designing, and that neither she nor Wylie—nor Malliard when furtively consulted—could discern any way of shortening their cruise with, and now utter dependence upon, the multi-millionaire.

Wireless code flashes were still coming in, proving the French, as Pedro had predicted, were not going to lose a Lerulot, a Malliard or a Brune without searching far and wide to run them down or determine their fate. The wireless reported that the dugout canoe had been found, afloat and empty, leading to the latest warning that the convicts must have gained control of a swifter and more seaworthy craft.

The *Iroquois,* with the power yacht in tow, was cruising at a comfortable eight knots. Granville was gallantly evasive when Vivian asked their destination. She noticed that he drank rather heavily, and showed it not at all. Truly a man armed for contest; masterful, wary—and now as fascinated as any callow youth.

She held all his interest and his attention, while Wylie was left to converse with the master of the yacht, Captain McNeal, or roam about as he pleased. Vivian knew that if there were valuables in the safe, her partner would need time to discover it. And if any other prize—or any unforeseen peril—lurked on board the *Iroquois,* Adrian Wylie, most invaluable of subordinates, would straightway find it out.

Pleading exhaustion from the varied events of the day, Vivian retired to her stateroom about ten. It was as roomy as all the cabins of the *Esmeralda* combined. And for a moment, as on more than one previous occasion when she had deliberately set about attracting a rich or influential man, Vivian thought of how this luxury and lifelong security might be hers, if only she chose to play out the hand in a different fashion.

But then all the past crowded in, the excitement and tension of the present, a restless forward glance at the possibilities of the future. A swift attack, a quick profit, a sudden and conclusive getaway—that had been her favorite strategy always, and so it would remain. It had enriched and amused her and she asked no more.

Myron Granville might be persuaded to lay his millions at her feet. And, catching him off guard, she would pick his pocket generously, and vanish—another example of her art as a criminal.

Tonight, however, she felt a curious foreboding. With a touch of dismay, she recognized that she and Wylie were proceeding for once without teamwork, and obviously without a plan.

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Dangerous — foolhardy — she must think of some way out. And thinking, she fell asleep.

IT must have been close to dawn when she awoke, instantly conscious of the presence of someone else in her cabin.

She could feel an alien presence as she had often done in times past. Long ago Wylie had said that she had "not less than five sixth-senses." This instantaneous alertness after sound sleep was one of them.

Vivian lay very still, one hand thrust under her pillow. With groping finger tips she felt for the revolver. Then with a start of chilling alarm she discovered it was not there. What stupidity! She had kept it with her every minute since accepting their complement of strange ocean guests. She had never trusted the fugitive convicts. Why be such a fool as to grow careless on board the yacht of a Myron T. Granville? She realized she had forgotten to slip the gun out of the pocket of the white serge jacket she had been wearing before she changed to a dinner gown.

Having no weapon handy, she acted at once. Speed and surprise were always her emergency arsenal.

She drew her knees up slowly, rested her weight on one elbow, and turned slightly out of the berth. Her catlike quickness had never been more pronounced.

Her outstretched hand barely brushed the intruder, then on to the cabin wall, the door, the wall again. In split-seconds she had circled the small compartment, reached a dressing table. Her fingers dropped familiarly upon a metal tube. Up swung the electric torch. *Click!* Its blinding white beam fell upon the hesitant, apepoised figure of a man leaning near the berth she had vacated.

It was the ex-warder, the formerly notorious monster of tropic discipline, Pedro de Martinque. But how had he escaped from the *Esmeralda?* He was dripping wet, she observed. And now she missed the vibration of the yacht's engines. They were not under way. What might that signify?

Vivian held the torch with grim steadiness.

But where had she left the white serge jacket? An enforced habit of traveling light and, almost constantly, of spendthrift haste, made her careful in choosing her wardrobe, but utterly careless about preserving it. That jacket—the revolver? And who was going to be the first to move?

Pedro, his badly inflamed eyelids in agony from the torch glare, moved first. He shifted his feet, bobbed his head.

"Well?" said Vivian.

"I have come to warn you," Pedro gulped.

"That, like Lerulot, you prefer to go overboard and swim for your life?" Vivian's French was a rapid snarl; her tone mocking, defiant. "Speak!"

Pedro dropped to his knees, head lowered, beaten.

Not many days ago the most hated and dangerous man in South America, outcast from humanity, outlawed from Africa, that broiling journey while cruelly bound in the dugout canoe had sapped all his overbearing volcanic impulses.

HE had been half menacing, half grotesque as he stood there, sodden and sun-scorched, with bulging muscles straining the cotton shirt and white drill trousers, sizes too small, which Matteo had lent him. Now

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in this unexpected, cowering pose, he was not merely animal and abject, he was revolting.

"I came to warn you," he insisted.

"Then go ahead!"

"Those convict rats—"

"Begin by telling me how you escaped."

"Brune left Matteo to guard me. Matteo is afraid of you since you threatened him and his sons and let Lerulot drown. Matteo feared what Malliard and Brune were plotting, and I persuaded him to cut me free."

"You couldn't swim from the *Esmeralda* to this boat."

"I did swim it. They're now almost side by side."

"Go ahead, tell the rest," she urged, the torch still as steady as a rock.

"Malliard and Brune, as you'd expect if you knew such scum as I know 'em," he whined, "plotted to seize the *Iroquois*."

"Don't lie," Vivian snapped, but her pulse had leaped at his words. Somehow she knew it was true.

"I'm not lying," said Pedro. "Matteo told me. He's scared to death, and no wonder. Piracy's one thing no country stands for—"

"Piracy!" exclaimed The Lady from Hell. Even the torch wavered perceptibly. Her green eyes flashed fire. After weeks of comparative inactivity, to land in a vortex of such mad, such stimulating excitement. "Go on—tell what you know—"

"Malliard first signalled the *Iroquois* that the tow-line had fouled. That stopped their engines. They sent back a boat and three men to fix it. The men were unarmed, of course. Malliard had a gun he'd stolen from Matteo's locker.

"Nothing was wrong with the tow-line. But he made one of the *Iroquois* men yell something—I couldn't hear what—but that got them to maneuver the big yacht, so the two were close together.

"Malliard bound everybody, but Matteo not tight enough. The men from this boat were knocked out cold. Malliard, Brune and Despard—who's not so done in as he's been pretending—took the yacht seamen's uniforms, came aboard the *Iroquois* easy enough and took control. As soon as they could arm themselves, the odds didn't matter."

"How did they know where to find the arms on this vessel?"

"Malliard, posing as your mate on the *Esmeralda*, got it all out of one of the seamen who brought Granville aboard."

Vivian stabbed him suddenly with a telling question.

"And how did you know which cabin was mine?"

Pedro gulped, swallowed painfully, did not answer.

"I thought so," said The Lady from Hell. "You'd better find your tongue, man. Just where do you come in on this?"

"Matteo was scared half to death. He's no pirate. I'm no pirate. Somebody had to warn you people on the yacht. It's Malliard's plan to load all who won't join him—which would be most everybody—on the *Esmeralda*, then tow it far off the ship lanes, wait for a storm and cut the tow-line.

"With propeller out of commission—and I think he's smashed the steering gear—you can see what would happen. Not to you, of course. Malliard's only doing this to get you away from all the others."

"A likely yarn," said Vivian, but again some instinct told her Pedro could not have invented any of it.

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"You came to warn me, eh? Repaying me for saving your life?"

"Yes—yes, that was it," he said eagerly.

"Just luck brought you to my cabin?"

"I crept about till I found you. Malliard and the others didn't hear me climb aboard."

VIVIAN was tense. The smallest sound, the least movement was always enough to warn or to inform her. Now, in a twinkling, she understood what the situation really was. Coolly she turned her back on Pedro, a calculated act of contemptuous indifference. He had thought she was armed with more than the torch. She deliberately switched on her cabin light and put the torch aside.

Pedro, still grovelling, loudly sucked in his breath. She was the most entrancing creature he had ever seen; and her easy mastery only added fascination for him. A brute, informer and bully, he had always abused any powers he had, while fawning upon superiors who had more.

Vivian's body was erect and slender in a cobweb thin gown; a tube of sheerest emerald green. Her flame-colored hair was an angry, molten cloud. The web-like embroidery over her breasts rose and fell evenly, unexcitedly, with her breathing. She was like a goddess, insolent, unhurried. She took two steps, picked up a foamy negligée—was about to slip it on—

And her eyes fell on the white serge jacket, flung over the back of a chair. It had been under the negligée.

It was characteristic of her that she picked up the jacket, rather than drop the revolver from its pocket, permitting her adversary the notion that she might be weak or afraid. And it was equally characteristic that, armed, Vivian Legrand was no more confident, commanding, or composed, than she had been all along, while mentally groping to locate the jacket and resolve the odd situation confronting her.

She held jacket and negligée easily, so that they made a billowy rampart from behind which she faced Pedro and the cabin door, standing ajar. Her voice lifted slightly.

"Come in, Mr. Granville," she said, "and rid me of your spy."

Myron Granville, still pompous looking, but taut, his face less florid, with white serge trousers belted over a blue silk pajama coat, blocked the doorway. He held—rather awkwardly—a blue steel automatic of heavy caliber.

She left the burden of speech to him, and he fumbled for sarcasm. "How nice! The Southern colonel and his fair daughter not precisely what they seem, eh? Harboring convicts, letting lunatics drown—dodging the police, perhaps?"

Vivian cut him sharply where she knew it would hurt. "You handle that gun, my dear, like the last surviving veteran of the War of 1812. May I call you Granny hereafter? Put it down," she snapped, "before you bump yourself on the back of the head."

Granville's face reddened slightly.

"I don't advise you to presume on my seeming awkwardness," he said. "Naturally I am not accustomed to shooting guests aboard the *Iroquois*—"

"But I've heard you've never missed your aim shooting a corporation out from underneath its stockholders, Granny."

"You'll spare yourself nothing, Mrs. Legrand, by abusing me."

Vivian, when she spoke again, raised

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her voice. "Then you are inclined to offer terms?" she asked.

"I shall dictate terms!" barked the true Myron T. Granville. He came into the cabin, holding the gun now very firmly.

Vivian, as if startled, suddenly dropped the garments she had held gathered in a cloud before her. Cowering, she presented an exquisite imitation of Beauty overcome by fear. Granville, in his ignorance, saw nothing incredible in that. Pedro, who knew her better, gaped.

THEN suddenly from the corridor came a *pop*, a blinding flash of white light, and the eddying drift of flashlight smoke, as quickly swept away by the perfect ventilating system of the yacht.

Adrian Wylie stood framed in the cabin doorway. In his left hand he held a camera of the finest foreign make, and pocketing the flashlight gun with his right hand, he snapped out a serviceable Colt.

Vivian Legrand laughed lightly, stooped and snatched the jacket and negligée. She donned the latter; and from the jacket drew her own ugly-looking little gun.

"Terms," she told her confederate, "were just about to be dictated."

"Fine," Wylie said. "Let's go right ahead. Whose bid is it? His?" Wylie taunted.

Granville could only snarl at them. "You—you crooks—"

"Take it easy, Granny," Vivian said, and though her tone was mocking, her eyes were hard and menacing. "No use fooling with your blood pressure." She turned to Wylie. "Doc, how do you figure Pedro being here? Just who is running—or not running—this yacht?"

"I've been on deck," said Wylie. "Malliard and Brune seem to have everything very well in hand."

"You pirates," Granville stormed. "I'll see you all swing for this—yes, if it costs me every dollar—"

"—that we leave you, Granny," The Lady from Hell put in. "And just to correct an error and relieve the monotony of your recent conversation—*threats with us are never cheap!*"

Granville was not easily cowed, not a craven thing like the sun-blackened Pedro who, dazed and fearful, still crouched on the cabin floor. But as the millionaire started to retort, Vivian checked him.

"Every word you speak will cost you something. We have no knowledge of what the French escapers may have done. You aren't likely to believe that, but it happens to be true."

"About this camera film, Granville," said Wylie. "I daresay you're an art collector? Any picture of Mrs. Legrand is rare art, and this one is peculiarly rare because of her—ah—informal attire, her intimate pose—and you."

"Blackmail as well as piracy?" Granville snapped.

Vivian interrupted. "Doc, let me handle this," she said. "Granville, we have a photograph by a master of amateur photography—my friend here couldn't fumble a shot like that. I am in it, as you know, with you, clad as you are, threatening me with a revolver. The picture is priceless. Your many Wall Street enemies would agree. As we don't collect pictures, traveling as much as we do, this snapshot, though priceless, can be bought. Here's an auction, and you are the sole bidder. Well?"

"I won't submit to blackmail."

"I know three rich men in New

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York alone who would bid against each other—very privately, to be sure—to get this tiny bit of film," said Wylie, "and have it enlarged."

Granville winced.

"To be made ridiculous, even quietly among your coterie of business associates and rivals," Wylie pursued, "would cost you millions, Granville."

"The price of the picture," said Vivian, "is now one million dollars."

"Cash, I suppose," said the rich man, sneering.

"This yacht is worth a million and we accept it. Where can we put you ashore, my dear Myron?" she said quickly.

Even Wylie looked a bit stunned by her proposal.

CHAPTER IV

Wealth Against Death

GRANVILLE opened his mouth to speak, thought better of it, and shut his bulldog jaws fiercely, his lips making a thin, purple line.

There they stood for a minute or two, deadlocked.

Tristan Malliard, looking as immaculate and striking as a musical comedy juvenile, walked briskly into the cabin. He had borrowed an officer's new white uniform, cap and white shoes. One would have needed an X-ray to discern the fugitive convict and murderer in this trim, debonair French mariner.

He glanced admiringly at Vivian Legrand, ignored Pedro, and turned upon Granville and Wylie. He addressed the millionaire owner of the *Iroquois,* but in rapid French which Granville either did not or would not understand.

"He says," Wylie translated slyly, "that your officers, who have resigned to him the command of the yacht, are afraid to tell him what orders you gave them."

"What have *my* orders to do with a gang of crooks, blackmailers and pirates?"

"That costs you another hundred thousand, Myron," said Vivian. "Price of the photograph now one million one hundred thousand dollars."

"One of the mates hinted," said Malliard, "that this man wanted to sail on and on, keeping out of the way of other ships—on your account, Madame," he told Vivian.

"Was that why you would have prolonged our voyage, Myron, with the *Esmeralda* in tow?" she asked. "How gallant!"

"You forget, I mistook you for decent Americans," he shot back.

"The film in your camera, Wylie, will now cost him a cool million and a quarter," said The Lady from Hell.

Malliard asked about the picture they were mentioning, and was told what had occurred while he and his companions, under cover of night, were gaining control of the yacht. That brought the silent, cringing Pedro to his attention. Malliard drew his revolver.

"Get up—come along with me!" he ordered, and then turned to explain to Vivian.

"We saw him sneaking aboard. I knew Matteo would be against us. He has no nerve at all. And it seemed to me safer to have Pedro here with us. He could do us no harm, as Brune and I already had seized all the firearms—"

"Except this!" Granville's voice was high pitched and metallic. He sounded deranged.

A man used to giving orders, to dominating those around him, inspiring fear and awe, a man who always

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bought his way, who was not able to endure opposition, who had stopped at nothing in gaining wealth and power—the tormenting events of the night had brought him now close to the breaking point.

So little had they heeded him as an adversary that Wylie, gun in hand, and Vivian likewise ready, had not troubled to disarm their angry host. Malliard also was equipped to shoot. And against such odds Myron Granville undertook to assert himself.

His right arm was swinging up. He took hasty, awkward aim. There was a flash, a sharp, jarring report that echoed loudly in the confined space. Pedro de Martinque, eager to serve so much money, at once leaped to Granville's assistance.

THE bullet grazed the scalp of Malliard, and blood streamed down upon his spotless uniform coat.

Vivian fired, a tardy shot because so carefully aimed. She knocked the gun ut of Granville's hand. It was numbed, and he clasped it anxiously; but the impact of the bullet on the weapon had made no mark upon his flesh.

Pedro, true to a treacherous nature, lurched at Wylie, striking at the precious camera he held tucked under one arm. Malliard, though handicapped by the blood that half blinded him, fired at Pedro. Wylie, taking one quick backward step, fired also and at such close range the discharge scorched Pedro's damp cotton shirt.

Hit in the mouth by Malliard, and in the chest by Wylie, the ex-warder of Cayenne cried out hoarsely and spun around, once, twice, with an odd, demented velocity. On the third turn he suddenly went limp and crashed to the floor of the cabin.

Vivian stood over him, callously gestured with her gun.

"Stone dead," she said to Wylie. "You'd better look after Tristan. I'll keep my eye on Granny here—he's pinched his finger."

The millionaire grew purple with fury and frustration.

"Pedro was your faithful dog, and on very short acquaintance. Strange what would draw you two together," she added, eyeing Granville contemptuously. "He was as low a specimen as I ever saw in human form. When he came sneaking to you tonight, told you who he was, and about the escaping convicts added to our crew, you believed him at once. And your first thought was to send him prowling into my cabin while I slept. I'd locked that door, Granville. You gave the beast a duplicate key you'd been saving, eh?"

He meant to keep silent, to ignore her scorn. But those burning eyes of hers extorted a feeble self-defense.

"You and this man were deceiving me, betraying my hospitality in a contemptible fashion," he said. "I took any advantage that offered. I had to know whether you were imposed upon—intimidated by the fugitives—or were in league with them in their scheme of piracy. Using that fellow as a spy, hearing you talk to him, gave me my answer right enough."

"Which was, that we are pirates?"

"A crime you'll swing for, so help me!"

"You only keep boosting the price you'll pay for that postage stamp of film. It's small, but it will enlarge, and then you'll have to resign from your clubs—the American newspapers will make it a nine days' wonder and you a laughing stock!"

His hand had stopped aching from the bullet's shock, and his temper was

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a furnace of molten hate. He started to answer her hotly, but stopped short. He was listening. Vivian also listened. Wylie, improvising an emergency dressing for Malliard, paused.

Granville broke the silence, laughing harshly, mirthlessly. Malliard sprang to his feet, his wound only half bandaged.

Elsewhere aboard the *Iroquois* a vague stir of commotion spread and resounded. Running feet along the decks, a shot, voices shouting, the sound of heavy blows, a wild cry in the night, then a splash. More shouting, more shots, a crackling broken volley, a fusillade.

Malliard dashed out to join his evidently hard-pressed comrades. But he was already too late.

Brune and Despard were not his equal as strategists, combatants or ordinary sentries. Those shots fired in Vivian's cabin—two, and then two more, close together—had signalled the imprisoned officers to attempt to overthrow the opposition. Their captors' strength was, of course, unknown, or they would have hazarded the break much sooner.

DESPARD was still weak, and badly hurt in the first surprise. Driven back against the rail, overpowered, beaten, he still fought savagely and was finally tossed, half conscious, into the sea. Brune tried to keep the attackers away from the store of arms. But as they increased their number by liberating other members of the *Iroquois* crew, he could not stay their rush.

Shouting to Malliard, he was backing toward the cabin, when a burst of gunfire caught him in its tornado path.

Uncertain as to the actual connection between the men who had briefly dominated the yacht and the guests of its owner, a selected group of armed men stole toward Granville's suite, to set him free if necessary, or receive his orders.

Malliard just at that moment dashed out of Vivian's stateroom and turned aside in the corridor by which they were approaching. He saw them dimly, recognized them as foes, for they were too many to be his accomplices.

Recklessly he opened fire. They returned his fire, a withering deadly blast. He was barely agile enough to dodge back in time.

Acrid powder smoke clouded the corridor, drifted into Vivian's stateroom. Hearing the fusillade so near, Vivian and Wylie looked at each other with a kind of consternation, rare indeed in all their past campaigns of triumphant offensive. They had not planned this mad piracy. That was young Malliard's handiwork.

Yet Myron Granville accounted them pirates-in-chief. Pedro had talked, had probably lied. He now lay dead. Malliard might already have perished. Vivian and Wylie stood to suffer for the foolhardiness of others. Granville would be vengeful, merciless, they knew.

And where, for that matter, was the furious yacht owner?

He had vanished. Smoke of battle had camouflaged his flight. Their perfect hostage was now out of their sight. Malliard, stained with blood and stalled by the accurate shooting of his foes, crept back to the shelter of Vivian's cabin. He had suffered two more superficial wounds. And his welcome from the pair who had thought him already slain was the opposite of cordial.

"Does every Frenchman think he was born to play Napoleon?" Vivian

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raged at him. "We should have left the pack of you to rot in that canoe."

"I know," said Malliard abjectly. "I have got you into bad trouble—"

"We've begun to notice it!" The Lady from Hell turned to her partner. "Doc, we'd better hide that camera film. Granville's vanity is bigger than his bank account. That flashlight picture is all we'll have to strike a bargain with."

Wylie pointed to the camera he had put aside out of the way on a chair. It was shattered. The film roll was undoubtedly damaged, if not hopelessly exposed and perforated. A ricochetting bullet from a revolver of heavy caliber had crashed into it, working this final ruin.

"Then," said Vivian Legrand, always at her best in leading a forlorn hope, "we'll have to use something else." She fiercely swept Malliard into her plans. "Both of you do exactly as I say.

"I had Granville right where we wanted him till Pedro was allowed to escape and somebody started playing pirates—"

"All my fault," Malliard admitted.

"Shut up! Now our one chance is to maneuver Granville back to where I had him. Quick now—lock and barricade that door. They'll be creeping up on us. Drag Pedro's carcass somewhere out of sight. I'll not want it till later.

"You, Tristan, you're bleeding like a stuck pig. I've got to be made up to look fatally wounded. Get busy, both of you, daub and decorate me."

SHE cast aside the negligée, standing before them in vivid, slender magnificence. And now she posed herself for sudden death, motioned Tristan to hurry. The Frenchman was weak and unsteady from his wounds, but obediently he knelt and daubed the ivory flesh of her throat and shoulders with his blood.

"Not my face!" Uncertain of the effect, she improved upon it, moving over without a qualm to lie among the dark stains marking the spot where Pedro had expired.

"Hide that camera, anyhow, Doc. Tristan, you have two guns? Both loaded?"

"Yes."

"Put them here under me. Can they be seen?"

"Not now."

"Good! Doc, give him my gun. You have yours. Those two you'll surrender. I'm the emergency arsenal." She issued further orders, then closed her eyes and by an artful trick of will composed her form and features to an utterly convincing replica of the insensible lassitude heralding death.

Following her plan the men thrust aside some of the furniture barricade, opened the cabin door a few inches, and commenced shooting wildly. Myron Granville's shrill anger could be heard between the shots, ordering his crew to return to the attack.

A volley crashed, and another, then sporadic firing. Wylie and Malliard hugged the walls, careful of angles as Vivian had commanded. She alone was dangerously exposed to a ricochet. By a miracle no glancing slug seared her.

Wylie and Malliard, having each discharged five shots, were now curiously silent. They left the door ajar. This was the crisis—the great moment of multiple perils.

Would Myron Granville so inflame his men, who must have suffered casualties, that they would charge in and massacre the trio? Or had Vivian Legrand judged his temperament as

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accurately as in the past she had judged other men of wealth and consequence?

Granville presently boomed, "Have you had enough, you crooks?" That didn't sound promising. "Do you surrender?"

"Make him come nearer," Vivian whispered.

But Granville approached them cautiously, fearing a trap. "I say—do you surrender?" he thundered, with a snarl.

"Yes—yes," Wylie groaned weakly. "Hurry—"

Granville did not hurry. But after a bit the door was pushed open slowly. A heavily armed seaman peered in. Then the burly owner of the *Iroquois* thrust him aside and started into the battle-scarred compartment.

"Throw down your arms!" he commanded from the doorway. The "Napoleon" that lurks in many masterful men of affairs had, as Vivian expected, come to the fore in him as he sniffed the smoke of gunpowder.

Malliard crouched as one half dying beside the arrow-straight stricken form of Vivian. Wylie anxiously bent over her, seeming to work upon a ghastly throat wound with fingers that trembled with anguish.

Granville stepped closer.

"Good heavens!" he said, startled.

He saw her more beautiful now then he had discerned heretofore, or even had imagined. And now she was lost—dying, or already dead.

She had fascinated him, and even when Pedro de Martinque came with his tale of deception and plotting, the thought had soared in Granville's self-centered brain that Vivian being a criminal rather than the daughter of a well-to-do gentleman only gave him more power over her. But now, though he had never denied himself what he wanted, his wealth would not weigh against death.

CHAPTER V

Vivian Makes a Sale

WYLIE and Malliard had cast their revolvers aside. Both perfectly feigned their concentration upon the ebbing life of Vivian. Granville was influenced by their pacific attitude. Here was surrender—and more.

He waved back his men who were following him on tiptoe.

"There's a chance, I think," Wylie suddenly exclaimed. "Dim the lights a little. She mustn't be moved. We can make her comfortable right here. Send for whatever medical supplies you have on board."

"But—" Granville started to object.

"Let's forget what's past for a moment. I'm a qualified doctor, no matter what else you may think me."

Granville began issuing orders, dispersing his men. A new worry had come to him. Criminals or not, to have a woman shot to death on his yacht meant an inevitable leak into the American press, then the exaggerations of his enemies—scandal with a big S. Who would listen to his honest explanations?

"We must try to save her. Full speed ahead. We'll make for the nearest good sized port," he said.

"Hurry that first-aid kit!" Wylie urged.

Granville repeated his order. He had returned to stand close beside the two men crouching over Vivian. This was the closest he had been to them, yet was not quite close enough. He bent lower, worried, admiring, suddenly suspicious.

"Where is the wound?"

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"Glancing bullet, just below the ear—internal hemorrhage," said Wylie, and then the signal Vivian had planned, in order that she might be warned when he was really near. "Look! She's coming to!"

The eyelids trembled, opened. Vivian's eyes were actually misty with pain, troubled, wondering.

She sighed faintly.

"Send for brandy, quick!" said Wylie.

The yacht owner nodded to a seaman, who hurried out, leaving only one man remaining on guard by the door.

Vivian sat up. "But you must not—" Granville started protesting.

Wylie and Malliard reached for the two hidden guns. But Malliard was weak and fumbled his. Vivian herself, by a lightning twist of her supple form, snatched it up. Wylie had Granville covered.

The armed guard at the doorway was staring, aghast. The combined shock of Vivian's resurrection and her revelation of loveliness was too much for his wits.

"Get out. Quick, drop that gun, or we'll kill Mr. Granville," she snapped at the seaman. And the man obeyed; let his weapon fall, and turned and ran.

"Tristan, pull yourself together!" She swept with feline grace to the door, slammed it shut, began rebuilding the furniture barricade. Malliard hurriedly helped her.

GRANVILLE, strangely silent, unprotesting, stood in the center of the stateroom. He ignored Wylie's revolver close to his ribs, and seemed absorbed in the spectacle of Vivian's intense leadership.

She resumed her negligée and turned toward him, saying:

"The fortunes of war!"

"For the second time I trusted you. No wonder you take me for a fool," said the millionaire.

"I take you for a smart man who wants no scandal and knows when he's had enough." It was just before sunrise. She switched off the cabin lights and fiery glints of the new day coming were reflected by her cloud of hair.

"You've got me prisoner," said Granville, "but you'll have to deal with the master of this yacht, McNeal. He's a hard man."

"But loyal to you?"

"Naturally."

"Very well." She turned back to her companions. "We'll have to bind and gag him, so that he can't make a move or sound. Also I want that signet ring—"

"Don't be cheap," said Granville. "A gold ring, only valued as an heirloom. What is it worth to you?"

"We'll return it. You can have it sterilized if you like." Her cryptic remark puzzled Granville and worried him. He was no longer bellowing and masterful. What troubles would overtake him next? And so he offered no resistance to their gag and bonds.

"Now, Doc," said The Lady from Hell. "A touch of surgery. Look at Granville's fingers, then pick one of Pedro's that can be made to resemble it and chop it off. We'll slip on the ring as further disguise—" She saw that even Wylie, hardened to her stratagems, was aghast. "Have I got to attend to this, too?" she demanded. "How else can we bring McNeal to terms? If he sights another ship, or resorts to his wireless—"

Wylie nodded and turned away with a grimace to Granville, whose eyes above the gag were saucers of amazement. What a woman!—they seemed to say. And what a lucky escape! To

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think that he had wanted to have her in his power!

Outside in the corridor all remained quiet. Officers and crew must be conferring on the rescue of their employer.

Calling through the battered door panel, Vivian insisted on treating with none but the yacht's captain. McNeal was obdurate. She then warned him to wait and listen. She signed to Malliard, who had been rehearsed, and he uttered a terrible groaning outcry.

"Just a bit of amputation, Scotty," she jeered. And Pedro's finger, bearing the signet ring of Granville, was tossed out through a crack of the door.

"You—you foul monsters!" McNeal was beside himself. "I'm master on my own deck—power of life and death. And by God, I'll string you up—"

"Ears and nose will follow, unless you do as you're told."

After a minute's thought, Granville's chief retainer capitulated.

The terms were, first, surrender of all available firearms. Malliard knew what weapons were on board. Protected from a rush by the barricade, he could see what revolvers and rifles the seamen brought and piled at the threshold of Vivian's stateroom.

Then Malliard gathered them all in, protected by Wylie and Vivian with guns ready.

THE odds were still great, but disarmed men were not likely to attack unless Granville urged it. His gag was removed, so that he could reassure the baffled McNeal about the apparent mutilation of his hand.

"Save that signet ring, but toss the finger overboard," Vivian called, still capitalizing her display of extreme callousness by means of which she had been able to dominate every man on board. "Send two men in with a sheet of canvas, to dispose of what goes with the finger. And tell the chef to hurry along a hearty breakfast *for four*."

She went to the adjoining bathroom and changed to sports attire. Granville was still bound and closely guarded, but a kind of exhausted amity had taken possession of the antagonists aboard the *Iroquois*.

"You'll land the three of us at Tobago," The Lady from Hell dictated as they sat down to breakfast, still heavily armed. "And no questions asked. You don't trust us, and I can't blame you, so you may have our clothing, all our baggage, everything we take with us searched—"

"Why?" Granville questioned.

"To make sure we sell you every scrap of camera film that Wylie or I brought on board your yacht."

"And the price?"

"How much cash in the safe when you looked?" she asked Wylie.

"Forty thousand and some odd hundreds—"

"You broke into my safe last evening while—"

"Yes—while you were discussing I know not what with my 'daughter.' I left everything just as I found it."

"We never steal, you see, Granville," Vivian explained. "We only sell useful and necessary things—in this case, camera film. The price was once very much higher, you remember. But forty thousand cash will be accepted. We rebate the rest for a safe passage to Tobago and a letter signed by you inviting Wylie and Malliard and me to take this short cruise as your guests aboard the *Iroquois*. That'll take care of any future charge of piracy."

THE END

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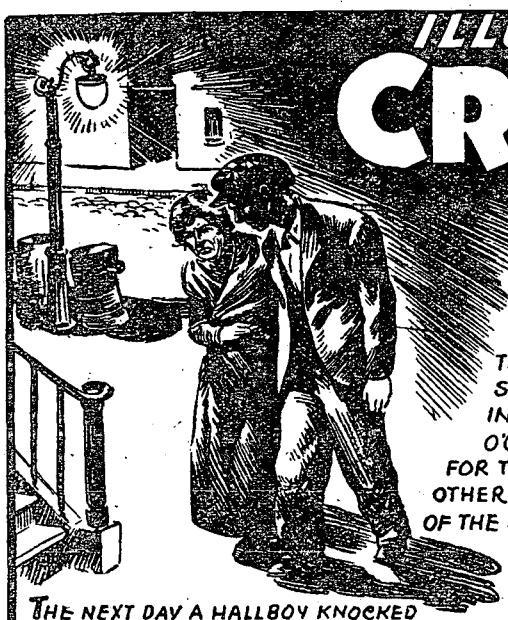
ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

WHO KILLED OLD SHAKESPEARE?

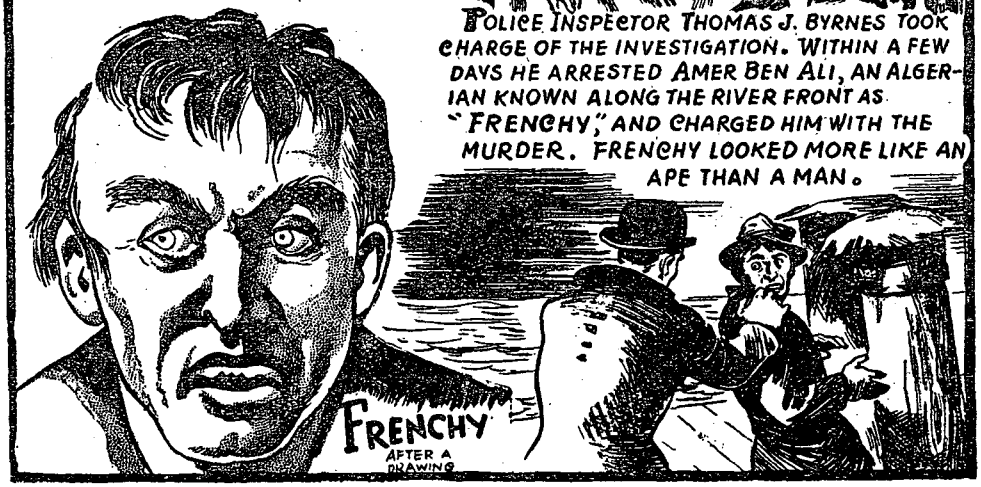
TWO SHAMBLING FIGURES LURCHED THROUGH THE NIGHT TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE EAST RIVER HOTEL IN THE LOWER EAST SIDE SLUMS UNDER THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE IN NEW YORK CITY. IT WAS AROUND TEN O'CLOCK. THEY TOOK A ROOM TOGETHER FOR THE NIGHT. ONE OF THEM WAS A MAN. THE OTHER WAS CAROLINE BROWN, AN AGING WOMAN OF THE STREETS KNOWN ALONG THE WATER-FRONTS AS "OLD SHAKESPEARE."



THE NEXT DAY A HALLBOY KNOCKED AT THEIR ROOM. THERE WAS NO ANSWER AND HE ENTERED. THE BRUTALLY MUTILATED BODY OF THE WOMAN LAY ON THE BED. THE MAN WAS GONE.

—THIS WAS IN APRIL 1891. IN THE WHITECHAPEL SLUMS OF LONDON, "JACK THE RIPPER" WAS KILLING AND MUTILATING OUTCAST WOMEN IN A SIMILIAR MANNER. WAS NEW YORK GOING TO BE VISITED BY A SERIES OF "RIPPER" MURDERS TOO?

POLICE INSPECTOR THOMAS J. BYRNES TOOK CHARGE OF THE INVESTIGATION. WITHIN A FEW DAYS HE ARRESTED AMER BEN ALI, AN ALGERIAN KNOWN ALONG THE RIVER FRONT AS "FRENCHY," AND CHARGED HIM WITH THE MURDER. FRENCHY LOOKED MORE LIKE AN APE THAN A MAN.



COMING NEXT WEEK—

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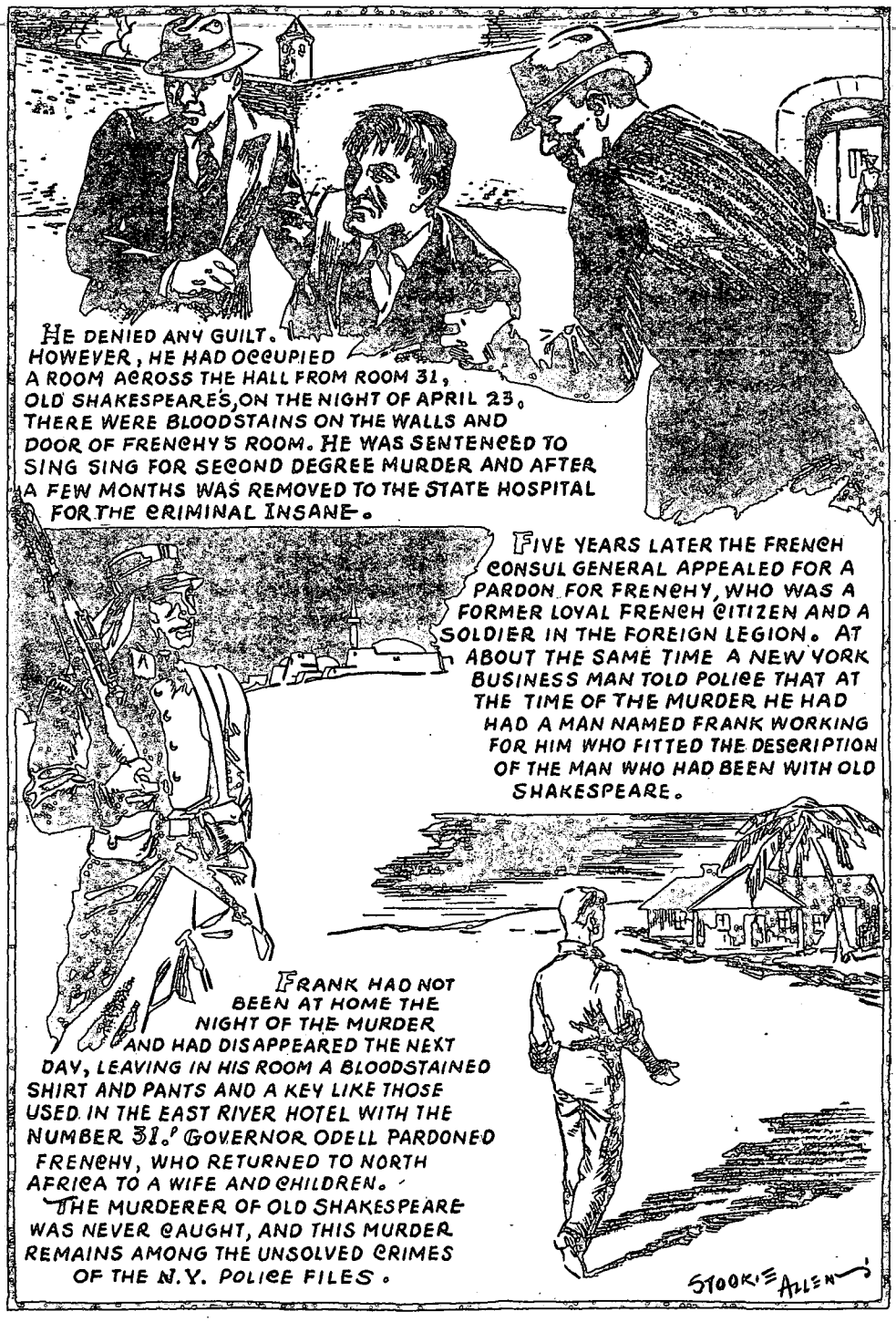
HE DENIED ANY GUILT. HOWEVER, HE HAD OCCUPIED A ROOM ACROSS THE HALL FROM ROOM 31, OLD SHAKESPEARE'S, ON THE NIGHT OF APRIL 23. THERE WERE BLOODSTAINS ON THE WALLS AND DOOR OF FRENCHY'S ROOM. HE WAS SENTENCED TO SING SING FOR SECOND DEGREE MURDER AND AFTER A FEW MONTHS WAS REMOVED TO THE STATE HOSPITAL FOR THE CRIMINAL INSANE.
FIVE YEARS LATER THE FRENCH CONSUL GENERAL APPEALED FOR A PARDON FOR FRENCHY, WHO WAS A FORMER LOYAL FRENCH CITIZEN AND A SOLDIER IN THE FOREIGN LEGION. AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME A NEW YORK BUSINESS MAN TOLD POLICE THAT AT THE TIME OF THE MURDER HE HAD HAD A MAN NAMED FRANK WORKING FOR HIM WHO FITTED THE DESCRIPTION OF THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN WITH OLD SHAKESPEARE.
FRANK HAD NOT BEEN AT HOME THE NIGHT OF THE MURDER AND HAD DISAPPEARED THE NEXT DAY, LEAVING IN HIS ROOM A BLOODSTAINED SHIRT AND PANTS AND A KEY LIKE THOSE USED IN THE EAST RIVER HOTEL WITH THE NUMBER 31. GOVERNOR ODELL PARDONED FRENCHY, WHO RETURNED TO NORTH AFRICA TO A WIFE AND CHILDREN.
THE MURDERER OF OLD SHAKESPEARE WAS NEVER CAUGHT, AND THIS MURDER REMAINS AMONG THE UNSOLVED CRIMES OF THE N.Y. POLICE FILES.
STOOKIE ALLEN

THE MADMAN WHO SHOT J. P. MORGAN

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I saw a light flash on shiny metal

The Racket Smashers

By

Richard Wormser

The Flash of a Pistol, the Thud of a Falling Body — and Hank Sherman, the Undercover Man, Is Wanted for Murder!

What has happened—

HANK SHERMAN was the undercover man for the Decker Investigation into the rackets of New York City. His job was to get the evidence that would convict Dan O'Malley, the legal master-mind. He discovered that the only way to do this was to join the racketeers himself.

Ratler, the disbarred lawyer who was helping Paul Decker with the investigation out of enmity for O'Malley, warned Sherman that if he committed a crime the investigation would not protect him. He did not care—then. The racketeers had murdered Ross Decker, Paul's father and Sherman's old boss. They also killed Decker's day chauffeur, Hoolihan, who managed a prizefighter named Joe Vennutti.

Sherman had just passed his bar examinations, but he used the friends made during his tough boyhood days in Yorkville to get an " in " with the racketeers. Dutch McTurk, the stickup man, and Shranz, the ward heeler, introduced him to a gunman named Garelli, who put him in touch with Donahey, the boss of the strongarm men.

This story began in Detective Fiction Weekly for February 2.

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A tip to Donahey to bet on Vennutti, who won his fight, resulted in a wild party at Donahey's house.

CHAPTER VIII

Sold to Death

I GOT up around noon and went downstairs. A Filipino in a white coat was dusting; he said no one was up but me. He gave me some breakfast and the morning paper. I called Joe Vennutti and told him to take a run around the reservoir. I'd have liked to call Ratler, but I didn't dare.

I was reading an article in the paper about the Decker investigation, which was what they were beginning to call it. There wasn't much about it, really; the article was about the Lexow and Moss and Seabury investigations in the past, and what they had turned up. From where I sat, I could see the whole thing as a steady growth. In the past it had been vice and gambling; then vice, gambling and police corruption, then vice, graft, police corruption and liquor trouble; and now, finally, a network of crime that encompassed nearly every business activity in the city. Way, way back, the paper said, the original crime network had concerned itself almost entirely with pickpockets. Boy, an investigator had it easy in those days!

Donahey came downstairs around three, with a purple dressing gown and a purple nose. I wondered why so many dressing gowns are purple; it's a color that you seldom see in street clothes. I wandered into the dining room and watched him put away a quart of orange juice, four cups of coffee, and finally, three soft-boiled eggs with a little Worcestershire sauce poured in.

When he finished this his hangover seemed to be allayed, and he deigned to notice that I was in the same room with him.

"Don't think I don't know you helped me up to bed last night, kid," he said. "Most guys would have taken the chance to cop my girl." He grinned, evilly.

I said: "It's nothing, pal. I'm just sitting here, waiting to go back to work."

"Sunday's a tough night in the markets, huh?" He wasn't as dumb as he might have looked.

"Pretty tough, I hear. This is my first Sunday on. I was a private chauffeur up to a few days ago."

"More dough in that. Why did you quit? Or was you bounced?"

"Naw." I told the old story. "I quit because I wouldn't carry a roscoe for something I didn't know about. I was chauffeuring for this boy Decker's old man." I said it without flinching. And Mr. Decker was the finest man that ever wore shoe leather.

"They bumped him off, huh?" Donahey said. He knew what was going on. "How do you like doing it the heavy way, kid? I ask because I might use you."

This was the chance. I had worked for some pretty tough years to get my lawyer's degree and I knew at that moment that it hung in the balance, as well as maybe my freedom and even my life. But I thought of Mr. Decker dying because he was too brave to kick into a couple of mugs like Donahey and his henchmen. And I thought some, too—I hope—of what this racket meant to the city, to guys like Kremel, and to the cop who wanted me to bring him tomatoes because he couldn't afford vegetables, and to people like those I had imitated, who were trying to get cheap jobs doing the heavy, and

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had to kick in a big share of their wages. And I told myself I wasn't scared—much.

So I said what I should have said. I said, "I'm doing the heavy because I don't know any other way of making coffee. If Joe would get into the big time, I'd never heave a crate again. I hear there's plenty dough fighting."

"So you're going back to Washington Market in a couple of hours and start heaving celery crates again?"

"No celery—tomatoes."

"D'ja ever heave a pineapple?"

"No. I used to run liquor for Herb Schwartz but I never did any of the muscle work for him."

"Schwartz that got gunned out by the Turtle Bay mob?" Donahey asked.

"Yeah."

"You like to have callouses on your hands?" Donahey asked.

"I like it," I said, playing it easy, now that I had committed myself, "better than cooling my ears in the big house for five years."

"For what?" Donahey asked. The slight setback had made him keener to have me. "Dan O'Malley's office handles my boys. You won't take no raps." He leaned forward, over the breakfast table, thrusting his three chins out at me. "Hell with this job, kid. Garelli's going out to do a little work for us this evening. You go with him, boy, and you'll never forget it."

"All right," I said, as though I was a dumb kid like Garelli who was falling for the easy dough, and not caring what he did for it. "What time do we go out?"

"Soon as it's dark," Donahey told me. "There's a fellow in the chicken feed business that's been acting a little stubborn, and we're going to set his trade back a mite."

"If I don't have to go till dark," I said, "I might as well go up and see how Joe's making out."

I WATCHED Donahey's face. I would have back-pedaled if there had been any suspicion in that fat countenance; but there wasn't. So I faded before ever Garelli was up; faded and was on my way uptown to see Ratler. Despite the fact that I was supposed to be a lawyer by certificate from the bar committee, I wanted legal advice, and I wanted it badly. Suppose I went in with Garelli and some of the boys on his expedition; would the fact that I had previously taken my oath as one of Decker's deputies cover me if I was involved in some racket activity?

I doubted it, but maybe Ratler could give me an out. The servant seemed to have the day off; anyway, Ratler's daughter, Margaret, let me in. Her father, she said, was out walking on the Drive; would I come in?

I would. We sat down; and looking at her I seemed miles removed from all the grime and horror of the night before; pollution that I didn't know existed at the time.

"You've been pretty swell sheltered, haven't you?" I asked. "I'm the first guttersnipe you ever met, I guess?"

She disregarded a rude opening question. "What are racketeers like?" she said.

I quieted down. "Much like other people," I said, after a moment. "Probably you know some friend of your father's who likes to spend his time with cheap night club entertainers. A lot of them are like that. And, well, a lot of them just take their dough and go home to the wife, and say the money came from running a saloon or a pool-room and dandle the kids on their knee, and maybe get shut of the mob after the pile is made—or maybe not."

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She said, not at all lightly, "That's what I expected, Hank. Just like other people. When I used to visit dad up at the prison, I'd see these other women visiting their men—fathers, sons, husbands. And they didn't seem so different from the women I knew."

"You haven't been so sheltered," I said gravely. "Most girls would never want to mention that their fathers had been in prison. You—you're kind of brave."

"Thanks, Henry. But everybody knows father was up the river once. Why try and—here he is, now."

Most big men aren't scrupulously neat. Ratler was, and I still wonder just how much his having to wear prison uniforms for so long had to do with it. He came in in his frock coat and derby and striped trousers, and I couldn't help thinking how he must have looked in the gray shirt and woolen pants that the State of New York provides its guests.

He didn't seem surprised to see me, but then I never saw him surprised. He said, "Anything to report? Got anything on O'Malley yet?"

I caught Margaret looking at me, but it didn't mean anything. Not then. I said, "No. Not on O'Malley. But I seem to have made tops with an underling called Donahey. He wants me to enlist, join the racket. How do I rate if I do some undefined job for him?"

The light went out of Ratler's eyes. He said, a little dully, "Not very well. There is the precedent of a Federal man in this city, a prohibition agent—I forget his name, but I could look it up—who claimed, as a defense, that he was doing errands for the mob so as to get to the higher up. The jury disbelieved him and sent him up. It's not statutory law, but it is a precedent."

"But I think I remember that case," I said. "Wasn't he taking bribes?"

Ratler droned, "That's how it looked to the jury—and to the newspapers. You see? That's how you'll look if you are turned up as being in the same sort of spot. There was the Secret Service man—and there is no doubt he acted in good faith—who bought the mercury with which the mob he was roping coated their counterfeits. He went up, too."

"But how am I going to get evidence, then?" I asked.

Ratler said, "It's up to you. There's no way, really. It's why the racket exists. It's why it's able to kill people and threaten them, and get away with it. It all depends on just exactly how much you want to lick them. You can take a chance—or not."

I THOUGHT, suddenly: Donahey expects me back. If I don't come back, I'll be through with him; I'm not liable to get another series of events that will get me as far into the racket as I am now. I'll take it. I said, "Okay."

The big fellow shook hands with me. "Be very careful to note any mention of O'Malley's name," he said.

I went back downtown.

By dark, sitting in Donahey's big living room, there had been a good deal of liquor consumed. Garelli was there, and this Greffinger had shown up, Garelli's partner; Donahey and I. The girls were gone, they had disappeared before I got back. I only took one drink, though I wanted more; my stomach was like a ball of ice, and my hands shook a little.

It gets dark early in winter. I remember sitting there and watching the light fade outside the window, until the Filipino came in and pulled the shades; then I knew it was time to go.

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It'll be over soon, I told myself; men do this sort of job every night. And men die every day, too.

"Okay," Donahey said, finally. "Got guns?" Garelli and Greffinger nodded. The boss went to a table and unlocked a drawer. He tossed me a .38 revolver. "Better carry it, Sherman."

I nodded. Garelli drained his glass quickly; it was strange how the liquor didn't show on him. Greffinger was very white, and his eyes seemed sunk way into his head. I don't know how I looked. At any rate my knees didn't knock together too much.

"You know where to pick up the punks?" Donahey asked. Garelli dipped his head. We all shook hands, ceremoniously, and Greffinger and I followed Garelli out.

I never saw such a quiet street. We had to walk over to Fifth to catch a cab. Al Greffinger and I piled in; Garelli gave the address to the driver, and the cab took off. Once when we stopped for traffic, some pigeons were feeding under a street lamp. Al said, "You don't often see that. Pigeons don't go out much after dark. I used to have coops on the roof when I was a kid."

The cab went on, and finally stopped in front of a dingy building that spilled light down on a Village street. A battered sign said that it was the something-or-other political club.

A thin fellow in a slick blue silk shirt and orange suspenders led us into his office. There were four kids—the oldest not more than nineteen—sitting on the edge of a desk, swinging their legs and boasting to each other. I never saw a litter of pups that needed drowning more.

"Here they are, Sime," the thin fellow told Garelli. "I haven't primed them yet."

Garelli grunted. The four brats swarmed over him, making fawning noises. Garelli slapped them away and said, "Prime 'em, Frank."

Instantly the room was deadly still. Frank unlocked his desk drawer, and took out a hypodermic needle. He handed it to one of the kids, and the punk turned his back, there was a hissing noise, and then Frank was reloading the needle.

Punks or not, I was a little sick at my stomach. There was something so cold-hearted about keeping boys—almost children—on the dope so that they would do the racket work. I realized that there was no other way out of it, that the racket had to be run this way, if it was going to run at all, and that, after all, these kids wouldn't be in this if they had any self-respect or control.

But I'd had the needle offered to me when I was a kid, and I could remember the scornful eyes of the other boys when I turned it down, and I knew that there wasn't such a margin between me and those loathsome brats who had sold their souls to death.

Garelli put the needle and four cartridges in his pocket, and we took off again. "Don't all walk together," he said. "Al, you and one of the punks go first. You know where we're going. The rest of you kids trail after them—don't get more than a half block near them or a block away—and Hank and I'll bring up the rear."

CHAPTER IX

The Pistol Shots

GARELLI started out. The snow wasn't falling tonight, but there'd been enough of it so that the relief workers hadn't swept it all up; the pavement was rough and slick

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in places, and it got colder and colder the nearer we got to the river and the market.

Ahead of us we could see the light gray hats of the three punks, showing when they went under a street lamp and almost disappearing in between. He took a turn south under the L tracks, and kept on going. A train roared overhead, sparks fell down from the third rail to go out on the dirty packed snow in the middle of the street.

Sime Garelli turned up his coat collar. I waited a moment and jerked mine up around my ears, too, grateful for the shelter it gave my neck. I hadn't wanted to before, for fear Garelli would think I was trying to hide my face from any cops.

Near the market we saw the punks turn off into an alley and disappear. When we got there, Greffinger had them all waiting.

"It's in this box, isn't it, Sime?" Al asked Garelli. Garelli said it ought to be.

They bent over the packing case, and came out with two little bags. They were smaller than brief cases, but they seemed to be heavy. Garelli gave two of the punks a bag each.

"Okay, now," he said. "You kids know what you have to do. Each pair of you get into one of those railroad cars and put a handful of tacks into as many bags as you can. Rip open the bags you don't put the tacks into, too, so they'll have to sift 'em all to make sure the tacks are out. Al, here, will get in the middle of the block, right opposite the cars, and Hank Sherman and I'll each be at one end of the block. If we see the cops or a watchman or anything, we'll whistle."

The hopheaded kids didn't look scared. I know that Greffinger did; and me, while I couldn't see myself, I knew my throat and nose were drier than Death Valley.

At the tracks we separated. I walked away, fast; Greffinger and the punks more slowly; and Sime Garelli stayed there. At the next corner I stopped and looked back. Al Greffinger was standing in the middle of the block, just waiting; the kids were walking across the open space towards some railroad cars, and Garelli had disappeared.

While I watched Al backed up into the doorway of an abandoned tenement. The punks kept on walking. I backed around the corner, where I would be in the shadow, and looked behind me and down the space towards the next batch of railroad cars. There was no one in sight between us and the market, which started about three blocks away. I had a hard job keeping myself from running up those blocks.

The kids melted into the shadows that the two box cars made. I couldn't quite make out what they were doing, but then there was a slight squeaking noise as though a door had been pried back, and then the shadows under a car lightened as two pairs of legs went up. I kept my eyes on those shadows, knowing that when they thickened again the job would be done for that car at least. The other car was too much shadowed for me to make out anything, but Garelli would be watching it.

Then it dawned on me that I was taking this thing seriously, that I had almost forgotten that I wanted this job to fail, and not to succeed.

But I didn't have time for any Chinese philosophy. The shadow under the car nearest me *did* thicken; and while I was still thinking that the punks had done awfully fast work, a flashlight played on the side of the car. That wasn't our boys!

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I SAW Al Greffinger going across the open space, not running, but moving fast and soft. I heard an old man's voice say:

"Come out of that car! I know you're in there!"

I saw light flash on shiny metal, too, as though the watchman was about to blow a whistle. Then I got a little mixed up, because of the shadow, but that was all over when two shots cracked out, and Sime Garelli came around his corner, waving his arms and pointing in my direction, and five men—Greffiger and the punks—ran toward me. I looked behind me, and the street was clear. I waved to them to come on. I saw that Garelli was running toward me, too, and I knew someone or something must be coming down his street.

Garelli's path converged with the last of the five people from the cars, and it was a funny thing that just as he got there the last man stumbled and went down. I saw Sime Garelli bend over, straighten up again, and then come on at a speed that left the punks far behind him.

He came around my corner, and caught me by the arm. "Al's dead," he gasped. "He croaked the watchman and took it himself in the pipes. You punks"—this very sharply—"scatter back into town. There's a patrol box down the street where I was, and it was flashing its light, calling the cops. They'll be here any moment."

He shoved bills at each of them, and shoved the punks away from us. He grabbed my arm, his hand shaking violently, and we went south, towards the market.

We had reached the outskirts of the district before the copper-sirens screamed. Garelli dragged me into a bar and sat down. I bought two whiskies, and carried them to him. He drank one at a swallow, and I was mighty glad to get the other.

"The second partner I've lost in a week," he muttered. "Cheest! I—I—Al was a good fella. Lake was a rat, but Al Greffinger was a good egg. We usta play basketball together up on San Juan Hill."

"'S tough," I said. He was still shaking. I got two more whiskies. He drank his and spluttered.

"You wanta be my partner?" he asked. "It's good dough and—cheest, I'm lonely."

I nodded. We shook hands solemnly. Garelli said, "We better go see Donahey and arrange for an alibi. The cops knew Al was my sidekick. There'll be murder-readers out for us in a couple of hours."

I'd known that all along. Wasn't I a lawyer? If two people go out to commit a felony and one of them kills someone, the other guy is guilty of murder, too.

Me, the investigator, I was wanted for murder!

CHAPTER X

The Law Snaps Its Teeth

GARELLI and I came out of an artichoke house. There was a couple of hundred dollars in our pockets, and we had only been working a few hours. This was the best of the three days that we had been partners. The murder of the watchman had had a salutary—from the racket point of view—effect on the merchants of the market. About a hundred and fifty of our dough was from three wholesale houses. The rest was weekly or monthly dues from the workers who belonged to our various food-handlers' unions.

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We went north, and as we trailed along the river I could see the tracks where Al and the watchman had gone down.

I think I would have quit the morning after that incident, but I had seen Ratler, and he had said I was all right. I was merely observing the activities of the gang, he said. As long as I didn't hand the tacks to the kids to put in the chicken feed, or pull my gun, or hit the watchman, I was in the clear. My rôle had merely been one of observer.

As for this collecting, Ratler said so long as I turned in all the money I collected, signing each bill to mark it as future potential evidence, I was not breaking the law. This was stuff that had not been in my law books; it was interpreting the law, not reading it literally as we had been taught to do, and I was lost here. For the first time I realized that a law school education is strangely defective in practical use.

So I was still in the racket, and I wasn't very afraid. Not much, anyway. I figured that in a week or so I'd get over looking behind me to see if I were followed, and I'd stop worrying about whether the racket boys were just leading me on, because they had found out I was an investigator. I figured that, but it was just whistling in the dark, just talking to myself. I knew I'd always be scared.

Garelli told me it was only necessary to use action once in a few weeks—everyone in the market knew who had killed the watchman and ruined two carloads of chicken feed. And besides that, I had complete faith in Ratler. Disbarred or not, he had been one of the three or four best lawyers in the city in his day; second, some said, only to Dan O'Malley, the lawyer for the racket.

We turned in at Kremel's, the tomato warehouse that had given me the job at the market when I came down here as an undercover investigator. Kremel handed his money over to Garelli, and didn't look at me. Boy, how he hated my guts! We collected his monthly dues from Doniger, the foreman, and from two of the handlers, and went out again.

It was just as cold near the river as it had been when I was a tomato loader, but now I was dressed up in gloves and a heavy overcoat and I could duck into a bar and get warm whenever I wanted to. I had to admit that the life of a racketeer was soft.

"We'll split a hundred today, Hank," Garelli muttered. "Better than working for a living. I'm going to buy that dame up at the Hot Spot a gold-plated accordion."

"I'm going to hire some decent sparring partners for Joe," I said.

"Maybe I'll buy me a fighter, too," Sime Garelli said.

"Better save your dough and hire a mouthpiece, boys," a heavy voice said. "The D. A. wants to see you."

I let Garelli do the talking. He said:

"Us?" Butter wouldn't have dented on his teeth.

"You're Simon Garelli and Henry Sherman, aren't you?"

"Yeah."

"Well, the D. A. has heard you boys are pretty smart. Maybe he wants to offer you jobs."

"Okay," Garelli said good-naturedly. I understood now why Donahey had not given us new guns after we turned ours in Sunday night. "Mind if I call the boss first? We don't want to lose our jobs."

"Give Dan O'Malley my love," the plainclothes copper said. He was a heavy-set, fat fellow, and he looked

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good-natured. He frisked us for guns, and kept me in a stationery store while Garelli phoned Donahey.

Then went went outside again. "Want to buy a cab, boys, or do I phone for the wagon?" the cop said.

"We'll buy a cab," I said. I wanted them to know I wasn't too scared to talk. My throat was awfully dry, though.

"So you can talk?" the copper said. "I thought maybe you was a dummy."

"And vice versa," Sime said. It wasn't a bad crack. The cop grinned, but not nicely.

We got out of the cab at the district attorney's building, just north of the Criminal Courts Building, which in turn is north of the Tombs Prison.

"How's this Decker making out?" Sime asked.

"I don't know," the cop said. "The regular staff don't have nothing to do with him. They're starting off from scratch."

WE went up in the elevator. It was all pretty casual. The cop pushed his hat back on his head in acknowledgment of the fact that we were walking through a room filled with female stenographers; I took mine off. Garelli not only removed his hat, but bowed and smirked at the prettiest of the girls.

"What a doll," he muttered.

The cop pretended not to hear. He shoved open a door and said, "Here they are, boss." The man at the desk looked up. "Thanks, Lahey. Boys, I'm John Roche, one of the A. D. A.'s."

"Mr. Roche," Sime said. "You sure we're the boys you wanted to see?"

Roche nodded. "Garelli and Sherman, right? Boys, this isn't a pinch. You're executives of a labor union, right?"

"Sure," Sime said. He reeled off the complicated name of our union.

"Buy those clothes on what a walking delegate gets, boys?" Roche asked.

"No. We don't take money from the Union," Sime told him. "Just a small salary. But the employers down there like to help the boys out, provide money for our annual clambake and so on. So they buy their insurance through us, and we turn part of the commissions into the entertainment fund."

Roche said, "It sings nicely, anyway."

Neither of us even smiled.

"Well," Roche went on, "as I say, this isn't a pinch. But as walking delegates—and insurance salesmen—you get around in the market a good deal. I thought you might be able to give me a little dope on this Greffinger thing. Al Greffinger was a friend of yours?"

"Yeah," Sime said. "That's right. He used to be my partner. Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Roche. Al was a greedy kind of fellow. We were thinking of kicking him out of the union on the next election. See, this fellow that owned the chicken feed had fired some employees. I don't know their names. Anyway, they wanted to get even. So they paid Al to do it for them. Or so I've heard. Al didn't take me into his confidence, knowing as how I wouldn't have approved."

"So that's the way it was, eh?" Roche said. He looked at the cop. "Take 'em up to h. q., Lahey, and show them the movies down in the basement."

"I thought this wasn't a pinch," Garelli said.

"It's changed its complexion," Roche said.

"Let's have a mouthpiece," Sime

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asked. His voice was still quiet, but a little uncertain.

"Tonight," Roche told him. "About three hours from—"

The phone rang. Roche picked it up, said one smooth "yes" into it, one "yes" that wasn't too smooth, and finally banged the receiver down without saying good-by.

"Turn 'em loose, Lahey," he said. "There's a *habeas corpus* waiting for them up at headquarters. We haven't got enough on them to get a magistrate to hold them." He put his hands flat on the desk and hoisted his body onto them, leaning forward and frowning at us.

"You can go," he said. "You win. I'm not going to waste the county's time telling you to go straight or we'll get you, or telling you that the cops and this office are going to have an eye on you. I'm just going to say this one thing: I think you are a pair of heels; I think the men you work for are heels, and I would love to forget that I have sworn to uphold the law, and take a gun and shoot you both dead."

His voice was as cold as ice. He lowered himself into his chair and added, "There, that didn't do any good, but it relieved my feelings, and it lets you know what kind of a break you'll get if this office ever has a chance to prosecute you. Now get out."

We walked slowly to the door. Sime turned and said, "You got us wrong, Mr. Roche. You won't ever prosecute us. We're law-abiding union—"

Roche's Irish face got red as a beet, and a book came hurtling at Sime's head. He caught it, and held it a moment, his face blank; then dropped it and we went out. We walked through the stenographers' office, and to the elevator. Sime spoke there for the first time.

"I hate a punk loser," Garelli muttered. "Cheest, do we get sore when they get the business on one of our boys? What's that fat mick got to yell about? Ain't it all in the game?"

I said that I guessed it was. It was the first time that I saw that to the minor racketeers like Sime the whole business wasn't murder and extortion and larceny; it was a sort of contest with rules and sides and captains.

I have said before that minor crooks like Garelli and like Dutch McTurk, the holdup man, are not smart; let me add to that that they are cases of arrested development, schoolboys in adult bodies. I do not mean that they are morons; but in all the time that I served in the racket I never met a man in the ranks—I am not talking about O'Malley and the top men—who was smarter than I. And that is not conceit. I know a dozen law-abiding citizens who can think faster and deeper than I will ever be able to.

CHAPTER XI

The Mouthpiece

GARELLI said that Donahey had told us to come up to the office as soon as we got out of the D. A.'s office. I put up my hand to hail a cab; Sime pulled it down again.

"Bus," he said. "We're poor men." We had all that money in our pockets, too, and just an hour ago Garelli had been talking about buying a prize fighter and a gold-plated accordion.

We took the bus over to the west side, and walked to the office. It had the name of our phony union on the front door, but it wasn't like any labor union office you ever saw. There were no members hanging around to go to work, or for any reason.

Everybody in the outside office, the

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two clerks and the stenographer, jumped up and shook hands with us, and when we went into Donahey's he nearly pumped our forearms off. Then he picked up a phone and called a number. He asked for Mr. Krohn (I learned the spelling later), which was the first time I heard the name of the man over Donahey.

"They're back, Mr. Krohn," Donahey said. "I told you no D. A. could stick charges on my boys!" I couldn't hear what Krohn said.

"I went right to the top for you boys," Donahey said, effusively. "Yes, sir, I hired the best mouthpiece I could get to serve that *habeas*. A lawyer right out of Dan O'Malley's office. Nothing's too good for my boys."

"Yeah," Garelli said sourly, "but we pay the bill. How much is it this time?"

"Only a hundred apiece," Donahey said. "O'Malley wouldn't gyp a close friend like me."

That was just about as much as I had made out of the racket. It left me in debt to Donahey for the swell new clothes I wore. I shelled out, though, and so did Sime. Sime said, "Sometimes I think you have us pinched on purpose, Donahey. A guy can't save up a copper cent."

Donahey laughed off Garelli's crack. He said something about knocking off for the day and going out and having a few drinks. "You can't work anyway," he said. "They'll be out looking for you. Wait a couple of days till this blows over."

Garelli said a few drinks would be swell, but I begged off. "I have to go up and run Joe Vennutti around the reservoir a couple of times," I said. "This running a prize fighter is like having babies to look after." That always impressed them. I could get out of anything by saying I was going up to work with Joe. It made me a big shot to have a fighter as good as Vennutti was.

I called Ratler from the Hudson Terminal. "I've been pinched," I said. "I was picked up—"

"Don't tell me over the phone," Ratler's heavy voice said. "I think O'Malley suspects me of being behind this investigation. He may have tapped this wire. I'll send Margaret to meet you any place you say, and you report to her."

That was okay with me, though I didn't see how anyone listening in would need much more than had been said. But Ratler had the brains. "I thought I'd work out that prize fighter of mine," I said. "Tell Margaret I'll be running around the reservoir. In about an hour."

I picked up Joe at our room over the garage. It was ten days till his next fight, and I was afraid of getting him too light too soon; I was having him sleep late. I told him to put on his road clothes, we were going out to the park. He liked that.

While I sat there watching him putting on sweater after sweater, I wondered why I was so happy. Certainly nothing in the course of the investigation was right; I was hardly any closer to getting the murderers of Mr. Decker and Hoolihan than when I started, and as for breaking up the racket, it looked to me that I would be very, very deeply involved myself before I ever got anywhere near the top.

And yet I was happy. I turned everything over in my mind, and then I thought I was the world's prize sap. I was happy because I was going to see Margaret, Ratler's daughter. Hell, I'd always thought she was pretty, but as for falling for her—she was way over

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my-class, she'd been to a swell finishing school and all, and even if her father had been to prison, he'd gone up on a pretty elegant charge, mismanaging a bank he was counsel for. And me, I was a Yorkville orphan, and what education I had—including law school—I'd gotten at night.

"Come on, Joe," I said.

"You gonna run in those fancy clothes, Mr. Shoiman," Joe asked.

"I'm not running with you, Joe," I told him. "I'm going to meet a friend of mine over in the park. We'll walk around the reservoir and watch you."

HE said, "Oh!" We started out, Joe walking at my side. I didn't like him to run on the pavement, though a lot of trainers have their men do it. I had a theory that the shock of hitting the hard stone that way loosened up a fighter's knees.

Crossing Park Avenue, Joe said, suddenly, "Look, Mr. Shoiman—"

I jumped and looked around. There was no one behind us, except a nursemaid with a baby carriage. Just to show you how my mind was working, I thought at once that that would be a swell way to carry a machine gun; who'd look in a baby carriage? But this baby was crying.

"What'd you jump for, Mr. Shoiman?" Joe asked. "All I was going to say—well, I know you're the boss, and Mr. Hoolihan always told me to come to you if—"

"Yes, Joe."

"Well, I ain't complainin', or telling you how to run our business, but—"

"Go on, say it."

"Well, gee, I—Mr. Shoiman, those fellas that was at the fight with ya the other night—well, they ain't the kind of people Mr. Hoolihan would ever let me talk to. They look like the sort of boys who fix fights and get guys like me to dive, and so on."

"Don't worry, Joe," I said. I wish I could have said it to myself. "Those men aren't interested in fixing fights. They have their own rackets."

"You mean they ain't on the legit?" Joe's shocked horror was a little funny, but not very. "Well, chee, Mr. Shoiman, I—listen, you ain't like Mr. Hoolihan; I mean, he was old enough to be my old man, but you ain't more than a few years older than me. I—chee, Mr. Shoiman, you better watch your step. People'll be saying things about us."

I thought for a moment of telling Joe that I was impersonating a gangster, trying to get evidence for the Decker investigation, trying to revenge my boss and Joe. But then I knew I couldn't do that. If anybody at the training gym made a crack about me, Joe would spill everything he knew in my defense. He was like that.

I said, "Joe, let's go up to the Bronx and train. We might get a line on Gonzalez, the fella they say dropped the derrick on Mr. Decker's car."

Joe said, "Boss, I already got a fellow up there who's going to tell me the minute Gonzalez and Krashawer get back to town. T'en we'll go up there, huh, Mr. Shoiman, and you and me'll—"

"Paul Decker's got a right to avenge his own father," I said. "We'll have to—to do this thing legally, turn them over to the Decker investigation for trial. Paul won't let them get away."

Joe didn't answer. But his jaw stuck out the way it had just before he knocked out the coal miner at last Saturday's fight.

It was still winter and would be for quite a while. Only one woman strolled around the frozen reservoir's bleak

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rim. One woman, and a couple of men, walking quickly with their hands thrust deep in their pockets, some kids chasing each other, and an old man in athletic undershirt and white flannel pants who capered like a goat. Behind me a horse thundered on the stiff surface of the bridle path. I didn't like the looks of the two men, those pockets might have held guns, but they turned off and didn't come near me.

"This way, Joe." I ran with him for a dozen strides to get his pace, then dropped back to a walk, watching the woman. When she and I had each walked an eighth of the reservoir's edge, towards each other, I saw that it was Margaret. There was no longer any doubt in my mind that I loved her. I hurried a little, watching Joe go past her to continue his brisk, steady trot, and told myself that I must never tell her I loved her.

When we met, she said, "Hello, Hank." She looked as though she had been worrying.

I said, "Hello." I smiled at her, not shaking hands till she put hers out first, being very careful of my manners. "I'm sorry to get you out here on a day like this." Her cheeks were pinker than her make-up.

"I like it. Is that your prizefighter?"

"Yes. His name's Joe Vennutti." We fell into step together, walking after Joe. "I inherited him from Mr. Decker's chauffeur. He told Joe to come to me if anything happened."

"Oh." She changed the subject. "He trots beautifully. Like a fine horse. I love to see anyone doing anything well." She tucked her arm into mine. "When are you going to take me to a movie again?"

I started to say, "Maybe never," then was afraid I'd scare her. I said, "I might as well get my report off my chest. I was picked up by the district attorney's office this morning. For questioning. Tell your father that as soon as I was, my partner—his name is Simon Garelli, for the records—phoned our boss, a man named Donahey, and a lawyer from O'Malley's office was sent to police headquarters with a *habeas corpus*. That call ought to be in O'Malley's records. It's a bit of evidence. It costs a racketeer a hundred dollars to have a *habeas corpus* get him out that way."

Margaret said thoughtfully, "That sounds like very good evidence. My father will be pleased. Of course, it is not illegal for a lawyer—O'Malley or any other—to serve his clients in any legal matter. What you will have to do is to catch him taking money for something else."

"I don't think he will," I said. "I think this is how he gets his money. I believe that someone in the district attorney's office — not Roche, who questioned us, and who was not simulating his dislike for racketeers—is tipped off, and orders the arrest of the petty racketeers when O'Malley knows that they have the money to pay a good legal fee."

"In that case," Margaret Ratler said, "O'Malley will never get indicted."

"No."

"My father is convinced that O'Malley is more active than that, that he plans activities, superintends operations. I don't know how anyone is ever going to prove that."

"Margaret," I said, "what are you worrying about?"

SHE said, "Nothing." She didn't convince me. "Hank," she said, suddenly, "how do you like being an undercover man, an investigator?

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Do you—is this what you've always meant to be?"

I said, "If it hadn't been that I wanted to get the gang that killed Mr. Decker, I'd have quit long ago. I hate it, and I fear it. I—Margaret, there's nothing glamorous about crime. It's sordid, petty, disgusting. I didn't really realize it till now, till I got out here, in the clean air, with the ice down there and the trees, and—I'm talking like a softy. I'm getting deeper and deeper into the racket. I think I can get up pretty near the top in a very quick time.

"But the deeper I go into it, the more I get to associate with no one but the gang. And they are wrong. I didn't see it at first, but they're all alike in a fundamental, deep-lying way. They're twisted, life's misfits. You take Sime Garelli, my partner. He—he has no goal in life. When he gets hold of a little money, it goes for trinkets for some girl, clothes for his vanity. Donahey, the man over us, has a fine house, but his house doesn't mean to him what any other successful Irishman thinks of his home. It's just a swell place to throw parties, a fine front to impress other mugs, a sop to his vanity."

"But you said yourself the other day that there were racketeers who had homes and families."

"There are. I've only met one of them, a Dutchman up in Yorkville, and I don't know him well. But when I did get to know him, I'd find that same bottomless vanity, the craving for easy power that sets the others apart from human beings. I'm sure of it, Margaret, I—"

She said, "You said a moment before that you were afraid. What of?"

"The police have made a note of my name and face. I'm beginning to be known in the racket. I—I've got a hunted feeling already. I'm not afraid to die, if the cause is right, and the sacrifice worth while. But I'm not going to throw over my bar certificate and my safety for an investigation that just files a report and quits. And I don't know how deeply involved I am. Ask your father. He says nothing I've done so far can't be explained to a bar committee, but I keep getting in deeper and deeper. It worries me."

Margaret was silent for a moment. We stopped, and leaned on the rail, our elbows behind us. Joe Vennutti came by, starting his second lap, grinning out of a hot face. I stopped him and took off two of his sweaters, introduced him to Margaret and sent him on his way again.

"I don't want to get him too thin," I said.

Margaret said suddenly, "Hank, you quit this. Go down to Paul Decker and tell him you want a place on his staff, that you want to be in the office, with your name in the papers as a lawyer. They can hire private detectives, or someone, to do this undercover work. Someone who is used to living with crooks and racketeers."

I don't think I was so deeply touched any other time in my life. I felt like crying. I took her arm and we walked along for a few steps. Then I said: "It's swell of you to think about me. Swell. I—never had a sister, anyone who—but look, I can't quit now. I'd lose all the good work I've done. And Paul wouldn't give me an inside job if I walked out on him. And—Margaret, your father says it's safe, that I won't get implicated. . . I have to stick, until I'm sure that the investigation is going to fizzle. Then I'll quit cold. But maybe it won't. Maybe this'll be the one that goes through."

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"I'd almost sooner you took a gun and shot the men who killed your benefactor and got it over with, Hank," the girl said.

"That won't work. I don't want anyone else getting killed the way Mr. Decker did. We have to break this thing up, and maybe we will. At least I'll go down trying. And Margaret, I'll keep in touch with your father before I do anything, have him advise me what steps to take to make it clear in any future trial that I was acting for the law, not against it."

Again she was silent. Finally, she said: "That's fine." She sighed, as though a load had been lifted off her mind. We walked faster till we got to the western edge of the reservoir, where she left me. She said she'd call me at my room, later, and tell me what her father said about my being picked up. I stared at the ice after she was gone, thinking about nothing in particular, until Joe Vennutti came up and said this was his fourth trip around, and he was kind of tired. I took him to the room and gave him a rubdown, and nearly jumped out of my skin when the phone rang for me.

But it wasn't Margaret, it was John, Ratler's servant. Miss Margaret was taking letters for her father, he said, and Mr. Ratler had asked him to call me and say I was all right so far, and that it was about time I let on I was a lawyer.

CHAPTER XII

I Hear of the Killer

HOWEVER, I used my own judgment, and it said to wait till the next time Joe fought. I had made my biggest advance in the racket on the night of his last fight; when people are fight-conscious, they think it is a fine thing to take the winning boxer's manager out and treat him like a bosom companion.

So I laid my plans carefully. Joe was the wind-up fighter tonight, the main event. And I didn't see how he could lose. The boy he was fighting, a gentleman professional from Baltimore, was inexperienced. He had looked very good in Baltimore, and he fought once in New York, but each time they had matched him against the best man he could take, and he had just barely won.

Old Hoolihan, on the other hand, had kept Joe under wraps, feeding him boys that would make him stretch himself a little, but not too much. Now was the time for the killing. Joe's psychology was that there was no one he could not lick, that he had unlimited energy he'd never tapped; the other boy's that he had to work pretty hard, and that he'd already done his best.

I bought up a block of tickets for the fight. I gave two to Donahey, two to Sime Garelli. I said, "I'd like to invite the mouthpiece—I've never met him—who sprang us that time. I can still feel that copper's hand on my shoulder."

"You don't owe him nothing," Garelli said. "We paid him enough."

Donahey said that that was all right. If I wanted to be friends with O'Malley's office, that was right. "That's the trouble with you, Sime," he kidded Garelli, "you're a sorehead. Now Hank here, he's got brains. He doesn't stay sore about the last time the mouthpiece trimmed him, he thinks about the next time. I'll see the tickets get to the lawyer, Grossman his name is."

"I'm sending a couple of tickets to a friend of mine from up where I live," I said. "McTurk his name is. He'll be sitting by you folks, and if I don't

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get a chance to come around and introduce you, you make him feel at home. I want him to see what swell pals I have. The last time I saw him I was a private chauffeur."

"You come up in the world since then," Donahey said. "Thanks to me."

So I left two tickets at the poolhall for Dutch, with a note saying I wanted to thank him and Schranz for what they had done for me, and would he see if Schranz would come to the fight with him. *Keep your eye on Joe Vennutti,* I wrote. *I'm handling him.* Everyone loves to be on the inside, just like everyone loves to get free tickets to something.

I hadn't seen Ratler at all. Margaret and I called each other a couple of times, carefully, acting as though we were friends—which was true enough, I hoped—and arranging so that she would come out and call me over a public phone. I had not been very active in the racket in these days; since my arrest Donahey kept me around the office as much as possible, so the cops would forget my face. I hadn't been in the line-up and I hadn't had my picture taken, and he figured they'd forget all about me. It didn't matter so much about Garelli, because Garelli had taken a couple of petty larceny raps in his time, and the cops wouldn't dislike him or know him any more than they already did.

So I'd been running errands around the office, and I'd met Krohn, the next man over Donahey, that way. Krohn was the ostensible boss of the whole market; a very blond, fat man who reminded me vaguely of a nice, fresh egg. That may sound frivolous, but it wasn't. His mustache was about the color of the yolk, and his skin the white of the egg; his head was egg-shaped; and he had a bland, innocuous air to him that was egg-like, too.

I figured Donahey would ask him to the fight. I didn't want to be too forward and do it myself.

Sime was fetching a boy that ran one of the poolhalls up in the Village, from which we recruited our punks.

It was fine being the last fight on the bill. I kept Joe on the table on his stomach most of the time, and went over his back and legs. There wasn't a knotted muscle on him, nor a speck of fat. The other fighters coming back kept building up an atmosphere of excitement; it sounded as though everyone was winning, because the boys who lost just came in, said as little as possible, got dressed and got out, while the winners danced around the locker room and congratulated each other.

This hall was out in Astoria, and it had the two locker room system a lot of fight clubs use. That is, instead of giving each fighter a dressing room, they split the boys between two big rooms, one boy for each bout in each room.

THE boys went out for the semi-windup, a couple of lead-shoed heavyweights. I got Joe to his feet and began wrapping his hands. The other man in my corner was to be one of the regular rubbers at this gym, and he was already out there. The Baltimore kid's manager came in to look at the tape, and I walked back with him. His boy was thinner and taller than Joe, nicely built, but his face was just a shade sweeter than I like my fighters.

I went back, got Joe, and he rubbed his feet in the resin-box and started flexing his arms. We had about ten minutes more to go if the heavyweight item went its limit.

But it didn't. I rather figured it

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wouldn't. Down in the athletic club circuit heavy fighters score a remarkable number of knockouts. The call boy stuck his head in and yelled, "They counted 'im out in the fifth. You're next," and I draped Joe's bathrobe around him and led him out.

The Baltimore kid didn't look ready. His dumb manager had probably had him lying down when the call came. I told Joe:

"Give it out hard in the first. Then we'll see."

Joe nodded, leaning back easy against the ropes. He was dumb, and I liked him for it; he figured he was letting me take my share of his money to do the thinking, so he let me do it.

They shook hands in the middle, came back to their corners; then the bell brought them out. Baltimore came out off balance, still not ready. I was busy handing the stool down to the rubber and climbing through the ropes and I missed it. Joe cocked his right, let go with his left, caught Baltimore on the side of the head, and the kid went down.

He was up again in three seconds, which was dumb. He should have figured there was something wrong with him to go over that way on the first punch and stayed down till he steadied.

The crowd went crazy. The Baltimore kid came up fighting, and fighting hard, but I'd told Joe to give it to him, and my boy wouldn't back pedal. He stood up there, not moving an inch, taking them on the chest and elbows, and giving them back. They were almost toe to toe. Then, gradually, Baltimore started backing up. Hell, he should have gone away fast when he saw Joe was battering him down; but he was a game kid, even if he had been to college.

It wasn't punishment, or cruelty, or anything. Baltimore went back fighting, and Joe was taking just as much as he was giving. But Baltimore couldn't know that. He was the one who was going backwards, and it seemed to him he was taking all the blows in the world. Joe was playing up to that, too. I saw him take a horrible one over-the heart and grin as though it had missed, kidding Maryland, wearing him down.

In a minute and a half they hadn't moved more than two feet. Then Baltimore made his big mistake. He decided to quit retreating. And to do it he stiffened up like a clothes-pole and brought his chin right into Joe's fist.

Joe knocked him backwards so fast the boy must have thought he was an aviator. He bounced off the ropes, stayed on his feet, and charged madly at Joe. Joe sidestepped and came around to go after Baltimore, but the bell stopped that.

While I rubbed Joe down, easing his bruises—which were plenty—I whispered:

"Fight this one your own way. Just start off good, and then slow it down if you want to. We got four rounds besides this one." Because Baltimore was under twenty-one this was a six-round go.

Joe said, "The kid's the best I've met so far."

"Can you take him?"

"Yeah."

"Then do it. Right now." The bell rang, and I was pulling the stool out. I changed my plans because I wanted Joe to see how good he was.

Boy, what a round! Joe tore into the kid coolly and calmly, like a mowing machine, and there wasn't a blow Joe got in that he didn't take one back. But Joe's were just a little harder—

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until his foot slipped and he went down.

The crowd that had been yelling for him changed over and began to yell for Baltimore. I bawled:

"Stay down, Joe. Take nine!" He looked around and nodded, and his face wasn't pretty. Then I wished I hadn't because he wasn't resting, or thinking. He was just carrying out orders with one knee on the floor. On nine he was up, and as the kid came out of his neutral corner Joe cut loose.

I'd known all along I had a fighter, but I didn't know till then what kind. It was over thirty seconds from the time Joe's knee left the canvas. There wasn't much recognizable material to send back to the folks on Chesapeake Bay.

The rubber and I pushed Joe back to the dressing room. The other fighters had all put their clothes on and gone; we were alone for a few minutes. I locked the door and went over Joe inch by inch. There wasn't a bruise on him that wouldn't be gone in thirty-six hours. I sent him in to take a hot shower, and unlocked the door.

MY distinguished guests were there, all of them. They'd been drinking, which was natural enough, and Dutch McTurk had his arm around Donahey's neck. They fell on me. I was, it seems, the smartest little fella they'd ever encountered. They'd all bet heavy on Joe this time, and the odds hadn't been bad. They'd made money.

They wanted to see Joe, but I told them the champ had to rest, I said to wait outside, while I went up to the office and got my dough for the fight.

They were pretty hard to move, drunk and jubilant as they were. I hated to go off and leave them there, where they could pounce on Joe when he came out of the shower and keep him from the rest he needed.

It was then that I met Bill Grossman. He hadn't been noticeable before in that mob of howling idiots, but he pushed forward, a little fellow, broad and stocky, with a head too large for his frame.

"We haven't met," he said quietly, "but I'm William Grossman, one of Dan O'Malley's very junior partners. Donahey sent me a ticket and said you wanted me to come as your guest."

I said, "Yeah. I'm grateful for the neat way you lifted that collar off me the other day."

"First time any of my clients have ever been grateful," Grossman said. He lit a long cigar. "Cut along and get your money, and I'll see they get out of here."

I said, "Thanks," and got out to the manager's office. I got my check, and something else, an introduction to one of the big-shot impresarios of fighting. He shook hands and wanted to know how soon Joe could fight again. I said right away; that he hadn't been hurt at all.

"Swell," this chap said. "How about five hundred, win, lose or draw, for a go with Jake Killery a week from now?"

Jake Killery was one of the best in Joe's division. But after seeing him finish up tonight, I didn't think anyone could stop my boy. I nodded.

"Winner to fight the winner of a match between MacLino and Johnny Rain in two weeks after your match," the big shot said. "And the winner of that to get a shot at the title."

So I was full of elation when I hurried back to the dressing room. Bill Grossman was there alone, talking to the rubber I'd hired for the evening.

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"Where'd the mob go?" I asked.

He grinned. "I suggested they all go out and call up dames," he said, puffing on his cigar. "They would have anyway. You've got a fine fighter there, Sherman."

"I never knew how fine he was till tonight," I grinned. Then Joe came out of the shower, and, Lord, the hot water had dissolved most of his marks already. I went over and helped him dry his back, and told him the news. He was always pleased with anything that pleased me.

Grossman had walked over after me, and was listening. "Johnny Rain is plenty good," he said judicially. "Another of my clients owns him, Manny Gonzalez, up in the Bronx."

Under the towel I felt Joe's muscles stiffen. Gonzalez was the fellow who had killed old Mr. Decker and Hoolihan.

I sent Joe home, and Bill Grossman and I joined Dutch, Sime Garelli, Krohn, Donahey and the rest of them. Later in the evening, when I was exchanging dull chitter-chatter with a red-head at the inevitable night club, I heard Dutch McTurk explaining to Krohn and Grossman that I was the smartest little fellow who'd ever gone to school in Yorkville.

"Why," Dutch bragged, "in his spare time the boy went and knocked off a mouthpiece license one time. Didn't you, Hank, ol' sock, ol' sock?"

I said I had, pushing the red-head's hands away from where I kept my wallet.

Grossman said, "You're a lawyer?"

"I'm admitted to the bar," I said. "I've never had a chance to practice."

A couple of times after that I saw Grossman watching me quietly. Well, hadn't I brought Dutch along because I knew he'd boast about my law degree? That was what Ratler had told me to do, to let them know I was a lawyer.

But for the life of me I couldn't tell what Grossman was thinking. The racket boys might not have been smart, but they certainly hired smart lawyers.

CONTINUE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK

Next Week—

The LADY *from* HELL

By

EUGENE THOMAS

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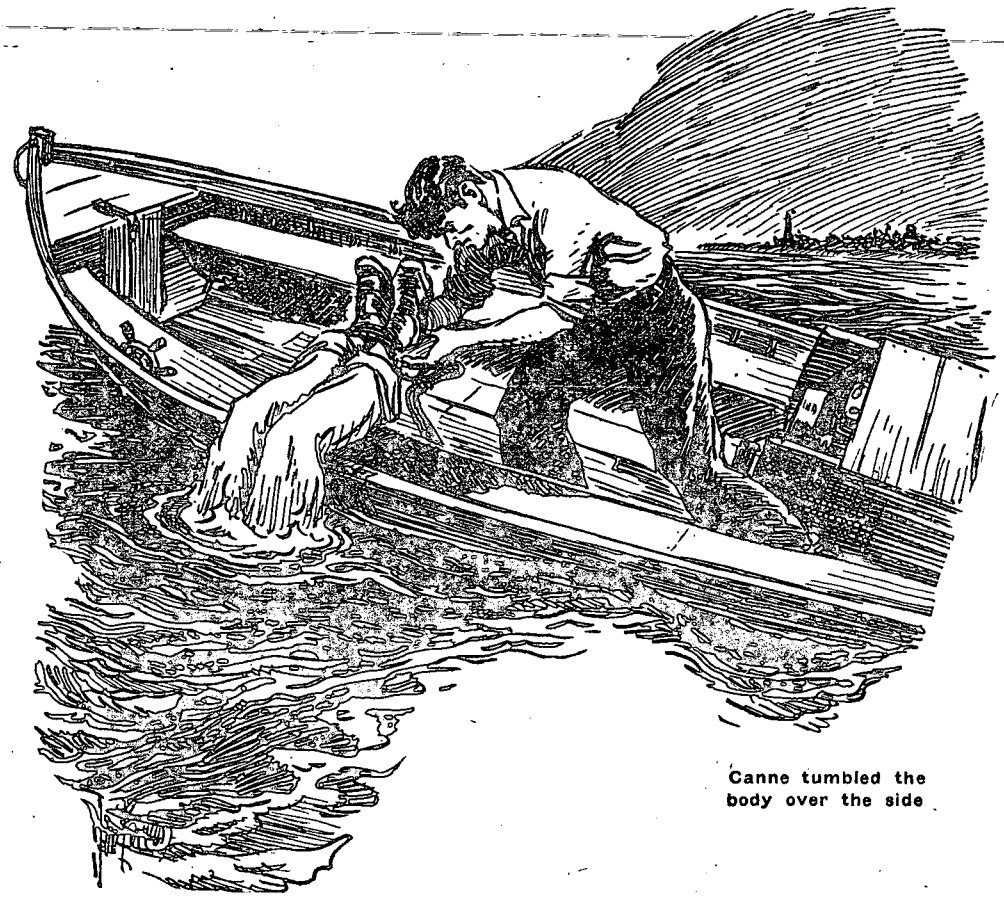

Canne tumbled the body over the side

Murderer's Luck

By

Ray Cummings

Water Would Wash the One Bloodstain and the Sea Would Swallow the Victim of Canne's Flawless Crime

THE little twenty-foot open launch with its labored *put-put* went slowly out through the rocky entrance of the Bermuda cove and onto the glassy open surface of the sea. The sun was a great dull-red ball, just sinking at the horizon. It laid a golden sheen on the blue of the water, the surface of which rose and fell with lazy ground swells as though it were the chest of some gigantic sleeping monster.

Young Bob Canne was amidships by the engine, steering with a small wheel on the inside of the gunwale. Peter Jenks sat on the broad stern seat, fussing with his fishing tackle. A sunset fishing trip which was destined to result in murder. Yet, as Canne sat

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brooding now he had no plan to kill. He was toying only with the dim thought—which had been with him for days—of how lucky a thing for him it would be if Peter Jenks would die.

Canne had always been a lucky fellow. At sixteen, when his father and mother were killed in the automobile accident, he had fallen into luck with this rich Peter Jenks, who had loved his mother before her marriage. Rejected, Jenks had become a friend, equally of Canne's mother and father—and when they were both killed, Jenks had taken young Canne as his protégé and companion. Canne had had great plans for himself during those following years, but somehow they weren't working out. Being the ward of a rich man wasn't such a soft seat, when you were twenty-one, as when you were sixteen. Jenks had his own ideas—getting a job and earning your own living, for instance—and you couldn't budge him.

If only Jenks would die . . . That would fix everything. But he wouldn't. He was only in his forties. Stunted, misshapen, almost grotesque little fellow. But he was hardy; there wasn't a thing wrong with his health. An accident would kill him. Thoughts are queer things. For days now, under the spur of the constant wranglings, the more or less violent quarrels which for no reason at all seemed to break out between him and Jenks, Canne had been thinking how lucky a break it would be if Jenks met with an accident.

Every problem would be solved. There was Vivian, for instance—Vivian, whose shapely beauty graced the chorus of the Merry Madcap Burlesquers. Jenks had found out about Vivian. He had raised hell, and to break the thing up he had planned this Bermuda trip. Two months here, after which, back in New York, Canne was slated for a job in an office at twenty per. Wouldn't Vivian give him the laugh!

"How far out you think we ought to go, Bob?"

"Eh?" The question jerked Canne out of his roaming thoughts. "Oh, two-three miles."

The great cliff of St. David's Head was already more than a mile behind them. A distant sail boat was slanting off toward the entrance of St. George's Harbor. Soon it would be night. Darkness, and just the two of them alone in this boat . . . Suppose an accident should occur?

The thought startled Canne so that he went cold inside. He pondered it. Some kind of an accident—

A night breeze had sprung up; out over the purple horizon of the sea a bank of sullen black clouds had appeared. The wind came now with occasional puffy gusts which rippled the surface like a school of fish being chased. Then surface waves were rising; the launch began swaying. A puff suddenly whipped off Jenks' battered Panama hat. It fell astern; a wave surged over it, half submerging it; and in a moment it had vanished in the darkness.

"Shall I stop?" Canne suggested.

"No, let it go. Lend me your cap—you won't take cold."

Canne tossed back his cloth cap, and Jenks put it on.

"WHAT you s'pose I'm liable to get?" Jenks said presently. "You're foolish not to like fishing. I'd like mighty fine to hook onto a sailfish. A hundred an' fifty pounder."

"Eh? Oh, yes, sure." It was hard

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to talk, with these luring, insistent thoughts. He could send Vivian a cable. The Merry Madcap Burlesquers would have to get along without Vivian's talent. They'd sail, in a month or two, for Rio—Buenos Aires—

"Think we'd better get the tackle ready an' get started," Jenks was saying. "It'll be dark soon."

"That white spoon will attract 'em just as well at night."

"I mean, dark here in the boat. We'd better get everything ready before it gets dark."

If only Jenks would shut up, Canne would have a chance to work this thing out.

"Go ahead," Canne said. "What's stopping you? Can't you let me alone?"

Dark soon. No other boat out here. Too far from shore for anybody by any chance to see or hear anything.

"Don't be ugly," Jenks said. "This morning we agreed not to bicker."

"Did we?"

Jenks smiled. "I think I'll try a little piece of pork rind on one of these hooks."

Canne hardly heard him. If an accident should happen—

"Oh—good Lord!"

At Jenks' sharp outcry, Canne looked back, startled. In the gathering dusk he could see Jenks, with his spectacles on now, holding up his right hand. He had been cutting a strip of the white pork rind; the knife had slipped and slashed his hand.

An accident. It set Canne's heart pounding; it seemed so dramatically to coincide with his thoughts.

"Damnation," Jenks said. He leaned and dipped his hand over the stern; then held it up, regarding it ruefully. It was bleeding; Canne saw a drop or two of the blood fall.

"Soak it in the water some more," Canne said. "Salt water's good for it."

Jenks rummaged in his pocket. "Got a handkerchief?"

Canne tossed back his handkerchief. Jenks said, "You'll have to bandage it; I can't."

Canne shut off the engine and went to the stern. Vague thoughts were making his breath stick in his throat. His hands were cold. He forced himself to say, "You—you cut it bad?"

"No, I guess not. But look at it, bleeding like the devil."

Canne's cap seemed to annoy the older man. He snatched it off impatiently and tossed it behind them into the boat. "Here," he said. "Tie it tight. That's all it needs."

It was a gash at the base of the thumb. You could get lockjaw that way . . . A week or two, and then Jenks dying of lockjaw . . .

In the gathering darkness Canne bent to wrap the injured hand in his handkerchief The bleeding seemed almost to have stopped.

"Easy," Jenks said. "Can't you be more careful? You hurt."

"I am careful."

"You're not. It's that slap-dash way you do everything—"

"Do it yourself," Canne said. "You make me sick."

He dropped the partly bandaged hand and sat back. His nerves were taut; against all reason his heart was choking him in his throat, as though what was coming now had already laid its excitement upon him.

And the cut hand must have put an edge upon Jenks' temper. He exploded, "You're still ugly, aren't you? A damned insolent brat—"

Canne felt the blood rushing into his head. "And you," he said deliberate-

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ly, "are a bully. I'm getting damn sick of your nagging."

With the cut hand forgotten, they stared at each other in the gloom. Both were sitting on the broad stern seat. Canne's right hand was at his side. He felt his fingers suddenly touch Jenks' knife and close on it.

"Sick of my nagging?" Jenks said. "Oh, are you? All I'm trying to do for you in life—that's just nagging. For five years I've done everything I could. And all I've made of you is a damned insolent brat."

"You talk as if I was ten, not twenty-one."

"No, I don't. You're twenty-one. But you're not a man. A man would want to earn money for himself—"

"To hell with your money!"

"Yes—to hell with it. That's right. That's what I've been thinking for quite a while now. As a guardian I'm a failure. Call it that. Call it anything you like. I'm through. You understand, Bob? I'm all through. Understand me?"

Smoldering fire of weeks, bursting out now, here in the darkness of the lonely little boat. Canne's head was whirling with the hot blood of anger.

He gasped, "Why—why, you—"

"Just a damned insolent brat, and you'll never be anything else."

"And you—you—" Canne heard himself saying. "You're just a damn gargoyle. No wonder my mother and father always laughed at you behind your back."

Amazing instant of horrible silence. Canne heard the deformed, hunchback little Jenks suck in his breath. Then Jenks' bandaged hand swung and slapped Canne in the mouth. Suddenly they were struggling. Canne found himself with his left hand gripping Jenks' wrist. His right hand came up with the knife in it. Kill him now! The thought, the decision, flashed to Canne. It was like a light in a turgid angry darkness—a light which had been shining always in his mind and he had never been aware of it before!

Jenks, with puny strength, was twisting, struggling. "Let me go, you insolent brat!"

And Canne heard himself laugh.

"You're going, all right!"

Then in the gloom Jenks saw the knife as Canne swung it up. And Jenks gasped, "You—you—don't—"

Terror in his voice. Oh, he knew, now at the last, that he was going! He tried to lunge, but he only rose up a little as though to meet the knife. Gruesome, the way the blade went into that bulging chest. Canne shoved it to the hilt. There was a choking scream—the rattle of death in Jenks' throat. The body sagged sidewise on the seat; it just seemed to crumple and wilt; and Canne dropped the knife handle and sprang backward.

II

THE thing was done! Jenks was dead. And Canne knew now that this was what he had always wanted! The thing that solved everything, accomplished now all in a few seconds!

Canne sat panting on a side seat of the dark launch with the lust and frenzy of murder dropping from him and a slow calm triumph coming to take its place. Already the ugly gargoyle vision of Peter Jenks was gone from his life. A thing of the past. There was only the future . . . The vision of Vivian's shapely beauty . . . A voyage over tropic moonlit seas to Rio . . .

The past, and the future. But suddenly Canne came to a realization of

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—the present. He was here—a murderer in this little boat—with all the evidence of his guilt around him.

What should he do? A wild panic swept him, so that he sat turning cold, shuddering at the situation in which so suddenly he found himself. What a fool! Why hadn't he planned this thing? Why—when in reality the thought of murder had been with him for days—had he just coasted along and trusted to luck?

"That slap-dash way you do everything." He started to his feet, trembling as though in actuality he was hearing Jenks' words. But it was only the echo of them in his head. Jenks was dead.

Canne made a desperate effort to calm himself. It wouldn't do to trust to luck now. He was in a dangerous situation; but if he used all his wits he'd get out of it. And pretty soon, when he got his bankroll out of Jenks' estate—the trust fund Jenks had established for him—how glad he'd be that this had happened.

The full darkness of night was on the little boat now. Canne took heart. No one from shore or any distant boat, could have seen what happened. He could hardly see, from this distance of a few feet, the slumped figure on the stern seat. He fumbled and found his flashlight, but as his finger touched its button, he paused. Suppose some boat were approaching? Suppose binoculars by chance were trained this way? He dared not light his flash. But the panic was leaving him now. What he had to do was clear.

He found the engine crank-handle—a heavy iron affair. He found a bit of heavy cord. He tied the crank to one of Jenks' ankles. In the dim starlight, he could see the gaping dead face. The spectacles were smashed on the forehead. The knife protruded from the bulging, deformed chest; blood had welled out in a crimson splotch on the shirt around the knife.

When the crank was tied to the ankle, Canne tumbled the body over the side. As it went, one of the feet flew up and struck him a glancing blow in the face, as though, ironically the dead man had kicked him with a last gesture of hatred. The body made a little splash, and sank.

A great relief swept Canne as he saw it go. But there were still things to do here. No evidence must remain in the boat. Deliberately he sat down to ponder it. There was no hurry now. He must take his time and think of everything, so that some little thing wouldn't bob up to trap him.

Bloodstains. The blood from the knife-stab wouldn't be a danger—that had welled out only onto the dead man's shirt. But Jenks had cut his finger. Distinctly Canne remembered that blood had dripped. He took a handful of greasy cotton waste from the engine; dipped it over the side. Then he chanced using his flashlight, just for an instant. The blood was there, and swiftly but carefully he wiped it away, and tossed the cotton waste overboard.

Had any blood gotten on himself? His trousers were black. He examined them as best he could with the flash. Nothing wrong.

The story that he would tell on shore was coming to him now. So simple. Jenks had been a fair swimmer, but nobody here in Bermuda knew it. He had never gone in swimming here . . .

The launch was swaying, with the engine shut off, drifting and wallowing now. Canne peered around him into the watery darkness. No lights out here. No other boat. The nearest

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lights were on the distant shore three miles away. At the bow, Canne slid carefully overboard, let himself down until he was thoroughly wet all over. Then he climbed back and lighted the small red and green, port and starboard side lights.

He was ready to start the engine and go ashore. But the crank-handle was gone! He had sunk it with the body! A wave of horror swept him—a vision of himself drifting out here all night—the wind off shore—a storm coming up. What tragic irony—what rotten murderer's luck—if a storm engulfed him and he lost his life now on the eve of his triumph!

But it was only an impulsive, illogical rush of thought. He had started the engine without the crank several times when the engine didn't take a a notion to act balky. Would it act balky this time? What a fool, forgetting that he might need the crank!

The thought gave Canne pause. If he could forget an important thing like that what else had he forgotten?

Nothing else. There was nothing wrong here. He primed the two cylinders of the slow heavy-duty engine carefully with a squirt of gasolene. Then he grasped the broad rim of the flywheel with his two hands; rocked it; turned it over. What luck! The engine was still warm. It instantly hiccupped; the flywheel kept on turning, and in a moment settled into the steady *put-put*.

Steering from amidship, Canne headed inshore where St. David's Light shone its beacon through the darkness.

THE rocky cove was dark, with only the windows of the half dozen white stone houses showing yellow blobs of light. And on the little strip of beach where he had landed the launch in front of the bungalow Jenks had rented, Bob Canne stood excitedly explaining the accident. Amazing how quickly these people had gathered when first he shouted his news. They stood in a ring around him now, ten or twenty of them. Someone had already phoned to St. Georges' to notify the police. And a policeman lived here at the cove. He was here now with his wife and children. The wife and children were standing gaping at Canne; the policeman and three or four other men were poking with torches around the launch.

Canne was saying, with just the right plausible rush of excitement:

"It all happened so quick—he was standing up an' suddenly he must have lost his balance so that he went overboard. I don't know—I remember the first warning I had, he let out a yell an' I saw him going over into the water. He couldn't swim a stroke. I often told him it was dangerous—"

Somebody said, "'E couldn't swim. You went after 'im? You're all soakin' wet."

"I sure did," Canne said. "It was dark as the devil—black outside there tonight. I couldn't hear him cry—couldn't see him. I took a header. It wasn't very rough out there. I swam around, but couldn't find him."

All so simple! How in the devil could anybody prove anything else? The ring of people around Canne pressed closer. Eerie, out here in the darkness of the beach. Several of the men had flashlights. They were all turned on Canne now so that all he could see was dazzling light, with a jabber of disembodied voices in the dark void behind it. He said sharply:

"Turn those damn things off me. You're blinding me."

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Most of the lights swung away. Canne saw a neighbor—a fellow named Outerbridge, pressing beside him. Outerbridge had never liked him; and the man now said suspiciously:

"Even when a person can't swim, he generally makes a lot of noise before he drowns."

It spread over the crowd with a little growling murmur. Everybody ready to think the worst. Like a pack of wolves, growling, snarling; and if you fell down they'd all pounce on you.

Canne thought, To hell with you all. You can't prove anything—think what you like. And he said:

"Oh, hello, Outerbridge—didn't see you. Yes, you're right. I did think, while I was swimming, that once I heard him cry. But it's hard to tell—the noise of the water in your ears when you're swimming in waves. I swam where I thought I heard the cry come from, but nothing was there. If he came up, he went down again before I could get to him. I didn't dare go very far from the boat—three miles or so from shore and I'm not such a very good swimmer myself."

"I saw you in the cove here the other day," Outerbridge commented. "Seems to me you're a pretty good swimmer."

What a damned ugly mind this fellow Outerbridge had, just because he didn't like Canne! But it wouldn't do to get angry. Canne said:

"Thanks. Anyway, swimming with my shoes on—"

Suddenly the flashlights were all turned on his soaking wet shoes. As though anything could be the matter with his shoes!

Somebody said, "If I was divin' overboard, I'd take my shoes off first."

"Maybe you would," Canne said tartly, "an' maybe you wouldn't. It isn't easy to do everything just right when a man's drowning before your eyes."

"That's true enough," somebody else said. The babble broke out again.

For all his confidence, here as he answered questions and told his unshakable story, against all reason a cold fear was coming to Canne. His mind wasn't here; it was twenty feet away, in the launch. What was going on there? Were they finding anything suspicious? He could hear occasional snatches of voices; but it was all indistinguishable, engulfed by this damnable ring of people hurling inane questions at him.

And now that it was too late to rectify anything, he seemed thinking of so many possibilities for damnable evidence. Blood from that accursed cut finger—he couldn't get that off his mind . . . And then he thought of his cap! Jenks had been wearing it. He had cast it aside; it was in the boat now. But what of it?

III

SUDDENLY one of the flashlights landed at Canne's waist, and clung.

Everybody was staring. Something wrong at Canne's waist? These damnable suspicious people—

Outerbridge said, "What's that you got in that sheath? A knife?"

Relief surged over Canne. The sheath at his belt held a fishing knife. There couldn't be anything wrong with it. He hadn't had it out during the entire trip. What luck that was!

"Yes," he said. "Want to see it?" He displayed its keen, unsoiled blade.

Somebody took it. "Handle it easy!" Outerbridge warned. "Don't get your fingerprints on it! Take it to the policeman."

Canne's temper flared. "Say, you're

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a regular detective, aren't you? What're you trying to do—prove I'm a murderer or something?"

It brought a startled murmur from the crowd. Canne had blurted it out; he was instantly sorry he had said it. He shouldn't have ever admitted that such a thing was in his mind.

The man was taking the knife to the boat, when abruptly the policeman down there called:

"How do you start this fool engine? There's no crank. What became of the crank?"

An error! What a fool not to have realized that they'd miss the crank? Canne mustered all his strength to hold his voice natural. He called:

"We haven't any crank. I can always start that engine easy with my hands. I'll come show you."

More than anything he wanted to go and see what they were doing in the boat. He took a step, but the powerful bulk of Outerbridge barred his path to the beach.

"Let's wait till he wants you," Outerbridge said.

Again there was that murmur from the crowd. Like wolves. But Canne told himself they couldn't get him down to pounce on him.

But what was this? From the darkness at the beached launch, the policeman was calling:

"Bring him down here—I want to show him this!"

Canne's mind went into a chaos. What was this? The policeman didn't say, "Bring him down to start the engine." He said, "Bring him down and show him this!"

Show him what? Had blood gotten on the flashlight? He had forgotten the flashlight. Canne had bound Jenks' cut hand. He could have gotten blood on his own hands. He had washed them later, when he dropped overboard. But before he washed them, he had handled that flashlight! Were his bloody fingerprints on the flashlight? That would be fatal!

Amazing rippling silence that now seemed spreading over the crowd. Murmurs against Canne. Questions—something of guilty evidence down in the boat? The group was shifting toward the beach. Outerbridge and another man were shoving at Canne. He stumbled. He gasped:

"Take it easy—don't push me." And he thought, to hell with you all. You haven't found anything.

Was it his cap? Something wrong with his cap? Canne's heart leaped wildly. Trapped! Jenks had been wearing Canne's cap when he cut his hand. The partly-bandaged hand was bloody. And Canne remembered distinctly now that Jenks had reached and plucked off the cap which seemed to annoy him. The bloody bandage had smeared the cap!

Trapped! But he'd have to lie out of it. He could say . . .

He was thinking wildly, That won't convict me. How could it? I don't have to lie—I can tell them he cut his hand. That's the truth—they can't convict me of murder because he cut his hand.

Thoughts are instant things. As he stumbled to the dark launch, something else swept into the tumbled chaos of Canne's mind. Jenks' spectacles had been smashed in the struggle! Canne remembered how he had seen them there on the dead forehead. Broken fragments of glass from the spectacles! They would be in the boat—and the policeman had found them! Blood-stained fragments of glass!

He found himself on the beach, being shoved up against the bow of

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the launch which was pulled high on the dry sand. It was all dark here. The blobs of two or three men and the policeman showed, standing in the launch. The policeman had a flashlight. He held it down so that it shone on his feet and left everything else in shadow. And he said:

"Come here, Canne—take a look at this an' see how you'll try to lie out of it."

Canne heard himself stammering, "W-what you mean? A look at what?"

Then suddenly the policeman's flash came up on Canne's pale face. And it stabbed Canne with a new memory. As he had tumbled Jenks' body overboard the dead man had kicked him in the face!

But the policeman's flash in an instant swung away. It swept over the launch and landed on the water of the cove just beyond the stern. Canne's breath stopped. He stared.

Somebody's voice said grimly, "Let's hear him lie out of this."

The horror of Canne's thoughts whirled his memory back. Just before Jenks had cut his hand, he had tied the silver trolling spoon to his line. The big heavy rod, capable of landing an ocean fish of several hundred pounds, had been jammed firmly in the trolling rack. The silver trolling spoon was lying on Jenks' lap when Canne stabbed him. It was there, of course, when Canne had shoved the body overboard. The heavy line had paid out silently from the big oiled reel whose click was off, and had stopped at the tied end. And now somebody had reeled it in again.

Murderer's luck. Canne stood numbly staring at the body of Jenks bobbling gruesomely here in the water, the knife in the chest, the engine-crank tied to the ankle; and the trolling spoon firmly hooked in the leg of the trousers!

Next Week—

THE MISSING LEGS

A Mystery Novelette by

NORBERT DAVIS

What cunning murderer placed part of the scattered body where the police would surely find it, and hid the rest where it would never be found at all? What was it that wasn't beer, and wasn't ale, and yet was both? It's a case full of riddles, with a crashing climax. Don't miss it!

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

February 22 Issue **On Sale Next Wednesday**

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"Put your hands behind you," Dirk ordered

The ISLAND of FEAR

By

Hulbert Footner

Under Twelve Feet of Water Dirk Finds a Startling Clue—and Attempts to Corner the Mysterious Murderer Aboard the Yacht Alethea

DIRK ELVASTON, hired as captain of the yacht *Alethea,* took his friend Tony Garth along as radio operator, on a trip to Diseree Island. Harry Prosser, the drunken owner of the yacht, brought an anthropologist, Professor Harford, along to study the strange white people who inhabit the island. Others aboard were Claggett Ashcomb, a dissolute friend of Prosser's Kirkall, a deckhand, Mike the fireman, McElderry, the engineer, and Wesley, cook-steward.

An attempt was made on Dirk's and Tony's lives the night before they sail, shortly after Prosser's daughter, Mona, had warned Dirk that she felt her father's life was in danger.

Three hours out from land, Dirk discovered Mona Prosser a stowaway in a lifeboat. He also found that the cook, Wesley, had deserted, leaving a note warning Dirk of danger.

With a sullen, fearful crew and a feeling of impending disaster, Dirk dropped anchor at Diseree Island. The vicious, half-witted white natives, led by Lipp Bewley,

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for January 11

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an Islander who appeared to know Prosser, met them and invited them ashore to a sing-song that night. Prosser got drunk, however, and remained aboard the yacht. Returning ahead of the others late that night, Dirk and Mona found him dead in his cabin—obviously murdered, although there is no mark on his body to show how it was done. Recalling that Lipp Bewley was missing from the gathering, Dirk and Tony returned to the island to question him. Lipp returned to the yacht with them, taking with him his idiot brother, Wye Bewley.

While they were aboard, Dirk caught Lipp in whispered conference with Ashcomb—the propeller disappears from the yacht—and Dirk found a mysterious note which indicated more trouble. And then Dirk, striving frantically to get to the bottom of the mystery, discovered Tony, his one dependable man, dead in the wireless room—murdered.

McElderry became insane and jumped overboard. Ashcomb tried to trick Dirk into leaving the yacht. Someone attempted to drug Dirk. At last, determined to have a showdown, Dirk and Mona round up the crew and lock them in the engine room. Going in search of Ashcomb and the professor, they find Ashcomb has disappeared and a trail of fresh blood drops lead them below where, on a grate of warm coals from the furnace they find charred bits of human bones and a part of a tooth. Obviously Ashcomb has also been murdered!

Dirk, under cover of darkness, decides to swim ashore for help. He decides to take Mona and the Professor along, leaving Mike and Kirkall aboard the yacht.

CHAPTER XVII *(Continued)*

More Intrigue

"WELL, I felt that it was only fair to tell you what we were going to do. You can decide for yourself, of course. If you'd rather remain aboard the yacht . . ."

"Remain aboard the yacht!" he cried shrilly. "Alone with those two thugs! They would murder me before you had been gone ten minutes!"

"Then you'll have to come with us," said Dirk.

"Yes! Yes! I'll have to come with you," he said distractedly. "But it's a hard choice. Suicidal either way!"

"Have you got a bathing suit?" asked Dirk.

He shook his head.

"Then strip to your underclothes. I'll wrap your clothes along with ours in a waterproof bundle."

"But— But—" stammered the professor, glancing at Mona in terror.

"Oh, for God's sake, this is no time for modesty!" said Dirk impatiently. "Mona will get ready in her own cabin and you and I will go into Ashcomb's room."

"I must get my wallet and my notebook. I couldn't leave those," the professor protested.

"All right. But don't show yourself on deck."

The professor ran forward through the passage.

Dirk had already secured the money from the safe and all the guns. To these he added Mona's clothes and his own. Mona had given him the boy's suit to pack. The professor returned and handed over his garments as he removed them. Dirk rolled up everything inside Ashcomb's oilskin coat and tied it securely.

THE professor looked like a bleached frog in his union suit, and it did not lessen the comic effect when he tied a life preserver around his middle. Dirk was forced to grin.

Out in the saloon Mona was waiting for them, clad in an abbreviated silken garment that made her look like a nymph out of antiquity.

Dirk tied the bundle of clothes to a life preserver.

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"You tow this," he said to Mona, "and I'll tow the professor."

All being ready, they went up the stairway, across the deck and down the boarding ladder. The wind had gone down with the sun, and the water was as smooth as glass.

The professor stood cowering on the grating.

"I'll never make it, never!" he whimpered.

Dirk coolly pushed him in. He rose to the surface gasping out, "I'm drowning! Save me!"

Dirk and Mona dove in. Dirk seized the professor's hand and started towing him towards the shore.

Kirkall and Mike came running aft along the deck. "What's the idea?" shouted the former.

"We're going ashore," answered Dirk, over his shoulder.

"When will you be back?" Kirkall yelled.

"As soon as we can get here," Dirk called back dryly.

"Don't desert us, Captain! Don't desert us!" Kirkall shouted pleadingly; but Dirk heard the break of laughter in his voice. Evidently he believed that this move played right into his hands. Was Kirkall the directing mind of the whole plot?

They swam on through the smooth water, warm as new milk. In the darkness each swimmer left a long trail of phosphorescence behind. Dirk looked across at Mona's body and limbs outlined by the misty glow. She was like a creature of silver cleaving the water. The professor sputtered and splashed.

Coming to shoal water they put their feet down. Mona's shoulders arose decked with little globules of phosphorescence like stars.

"This stuff will show us up if anybody is watching," remarked Dirk. "We must head for a point on the beach a little above Cap'n Jim-of-Jim's house. There's no knowing who may be hanging about."

Alternately walking and swimming, they made their way in. Looking over his shoulder, Dirk caught a blink of light from the yacht's deck. A signal light! He cursed under his breath. To his surprise it was not directed towards the settlement, but towards the lonely stretch of beach to the north. Who or what could be up there? It blinked out. He said nothing about the light to his companions, and they, apparently, had not seen it.

Upon coming abreast of the bay canoe at anchor, Dirk caught hold of the gunwale and looked in her. As he half expected, she had no tiller. He knew it was Cap'n Jim-of-Jim's habit to carry it ashore with him, so there could be no question of carrying off the boat without leave.

They walked out on the beach, dressed under the shelter of bushes, and stole towards Captain Jim-of-Jim's house, crouching low as they approached so that their heads might not be silhouetted against the stars. Though it was only a little after nine the windows were dark. A scent of old-fashioned herbs came out of the neat little yard.

In the faint light the little low-eaved house, with its big chimneys like ears, squatted sedately behind its fence of palings. They paused at the gate. Nothing stirred.

"I wish I didn't have to rouse him out of sleep," muttered Dirk. "It doesn't put a man in the best of humors."

"Don't knock on the door," said Mona. "Call to him from here."

"Ho, Cap'n Jim-of-Jim!" Dirk called.

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HE fell to shaking with helpless laughter at the sound of the absurd name. Mona joined in. Flinging an arm around her, Dirk suddenly drew her hard against his side in a sudden wild passion of regret because life and happiness were so precarious. She understood. A little to one side the professor was making little fretful noises.

"Ho! Cap'n Jim-of-Jim!" Dirk repeated in a shaking voice.

A tousled white head appeared at one of the dormer windows. "What the hell do you want?" Cap'n Jim-of-Jim demanded peevishly. "Why can't you come in the daytime?"

That sent Dirk and Mona off into renewed silent laughter. "What's the matter with you?" the professor whispered fretfully.

Dirk released Mona. "Sorry, Cap'n," he called, steadying his voice, "but it's important."

"Well, wait till I get my pants on."

He presently appeared in the doorway with his pants pulled over his nightshirt. His gnarled feet were bare, and he carried an oldtime lamp with a scalloped chimney.

"Come you in," he said.

When the light fell on Mona he was embarrassed. "Please to excuse my language from the window, miss. I couldn't see from above that you was a lady."

"Please treat me as a boy, Cap'n," said Mona.

He led the way into his sitting room. "Be seated," he said with old-fashioned courtesy. "I would rouse up my wife to receive the lady, but she is ailing."

"Don't think of it, Cap'n," Mona said hastily.

There was something very grim in the bareness of the room. It contained nothing but a little chunk stove in front of the chimney and a home-made table with a set of plain chairs, the latter constructed without any concessions to the human form. The only ornament was a big faded chart of Chesapeake Bay pinned to the wall.

But the place was very clean. Mona was touched by such a want of comfort in the old. Seeing her look around, the old man said, in his equable fashion:

"Once my folks had mainland furniture, but it done give out long ago. This I made myself. I don't favor fallals."

"It's very nice," said Mona.

"Would you mind blowing out the light, Cap'n?" asked Dirk. "There might be snoopers around. We can talk just as well in the dark."

Cap'n Jim-of-Jim took the request as a natural one, and coolly obeyed.

Dirk said simply, "Cap'n, there have been two more men killed aboard the yacht; the young wireless operator and Mr. Ashcomb, a guest of the owner's."

The old man, with his admirable self-possession, forbore to show any excitement. "Who did it?" he asked.

"I reckon it was the same hand that struck down Mr. Prosser last night."

"Why didn't you steam away at mid-day when the tide was in? You had steam up."

"Somebody had been tampering with our propeller. When we started the engine it was torn off the shaft."

"So!" said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim scornfully. "You were simple to let them do it."

"So it seems," said Dirk bitterly. "But it's gone. And apparently it is somebody's aim to kill us off one by one."

"What is that to me?" asked Cap'n Jim-of-Jim calmly.

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DIRK flushed. "I don't understand that point of view. Among our people it would be said that if you sat here and let us be murdered without lifting hand or foot you would be partly responsible."

The old man was unimpressed. "A man must look after his own first," he said.

"Then you refuse to help us?" said Dirk, getting hot.

"I didn't say that . . . How can I help you?"

"I want to hire your boat and sail over to the mainland for help."

Cap'n Jim-of-Jim was silent for awhile. "No," he said resolutely. "You can't have my boat."

"Damn it!" cried Dirk. "What do you value it at? I'll buy the boat!"

"Your money is nothing to me," said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim undisturbed. "What need have I of money, living here?"

"What am I to think of this?" demanded Dirk angrily. "Are you in this murderous conspiracy too?"

The old man chuckled. "Keep your hair on, young Captain. My only aim is to live out the balance of my days in quiet . . . Look you, if I let you have my boat it would be held as an act of treachery by the people here. And I would be run off the island."

"I will bring back a boatload of armed men to protect you."

"Sure, and after they had nosed around awhile they would go away and where would I and my old woman be? I have no other place to go. My folks have lived in this house for two hundred years. They are buried in the yard yonder, and I shall soon be there with them. I'm not going to yield my grave to a stranger."

"So, we've got to submit to being murdered in order to save your grave?" said Dirk bitterly. "By God! I'll take the boat anyhow."

"Sure, you could do that," said the old man calmly. "The tiller is lying in the hall . . . But it wouldn't do you no good. There is no wind, and when morning broke you would still be in sight of the island. Naturally the men would go out in their motor boats to see what you was up to. There is nothing that frightens them like the coming of strangers. They would use you rough, Captain."

Dirk had no answer to this. After giving it time to sink in, Cap'n Jim-of-Jim said significantly, "There is a better way of saving yourselves, Captain."

"What's that?" asked Dirk eagerly.

"These are poor ignorant people on this island, but not bad-hearted. Leastwise no worse than the average of men. They're afraid of strangers, that's all, and they act rough towards strangers to scare them away. Go to the settlement and put your case before them, Captain. That's my advice."

"Ha! I like that idea," cried Dirk.

"No! No!" put in the professor in a panic. "They are savages! You can't reason with them. Look what happened to you the last time you went amongst them. You were nearly killed. You can't risk it a second time!"

"Ah, be quiet," said Dirk impatiently. "And let me get to the bottom of this!"

"I will speak!" he cried shrilly. "You've got to think of the girl. What would she do if . . ."

"If you're askeared of them you could stay here with my old woman," said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim dryly.

"What good would that do me?" shrilled the professor. "If the Captain was killed what would I do on this horrible island?"

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"Be quiet!" ordered Dirk. "Go on, Cap'n."

"Have you any reason to believe that the men of the island are working against you?" asked the old man.

"Only Lipp Bewley and Wye Bewley. They're in it. I suspect that Lipp had Prosser bring the yacht here for some purpose of his own."

"So? Well, you can take it on my word, Captain, Lipp and Wye Bewley, they ain't no favorites on the island, and never was. There's no reason why the men should further their murderous designs. Lipp Bewley, he's a loafer; he's riff-raff, a hanger-on, and everybody knows it. And Wye, you can see what he is. He's not hard good. He'll do what anybody tells him. Maybe Lipp has circulated lies about you, and the men are sore. If you face them, Captain, and tell your own story they will remember what a liar he always was."

"Good!" said Dirk. "I'll do it!"

"Lipp and Wye Bewley come of bad stock," Cap'n Jim-of-Jim went on. "They had a brother called Nahum Bewley who killed a man here on the island twenty years ago. The men wouldn't stand for that murder. They run Nahum Bewley off and he never dast come back here. Awhile ago I hear he was put in State's prison on the mainland for some other crime. They are bad people . . . If you could prove that Lipp Bewley brought the yacht here the islanders would turn against him to a man."

Dirk showed him the crude map he had found in Prosser's safe.

"Lipp may well have drawed this," said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim, "but how can you prove it?"

"By this line of writing." Dirk pointed to the words *"Drop anchor here."*

"How can you prove handwriting to them as can't write?" he asked. "Howsoever, bring the map with you and show it to them."

"Can we go now?" asked Dirk eagerly.

"Why not? I'll go with you. Just let me get my boots on." He left the room.

"No good will come of this!" said the professor, lugubriously shaking his head.

However, when Cap'n Jim-of-Jim returned, he refused to be left behind.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Traitor Unmasked

WHEN they wound between the sand dunes and the crouching shanties loomed before them in the dark, Cap'n Jim-of-Jim called a halt.

"You folks stay here a piece," he said. "I'll go rouse up the men and gather them in Joe Siever's house. I'll prepare the way for you . . . We won't be able to keep Lipp Bewley out of it."

"That's all right," said Dirk. "I'll be glad to confront him."

"He's a smooth talker, Captain."

"All right. I can talk some myself if need be."

"Speak to them slow, Captain," the old man urged. "And don't use no hard words, because the mainland talk is strange to their ears.

He left them. Presently they heard him going from house to house rousing the men. They came out, and voices spoke back and forth. A dim light showed in the rear window of Joe Siever's house off to the right, and the murmur of talk from that source became continuous.

Dirk waited for a quarter of an hour and then led his two companions

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around the house. The front door stood open. The room was lighted by a single small oil lamp. There were between twenty and thirty men present, presumably the entire adult male population. They made a circle of dark, mask-like faces squatting on their heels around the walls. Neither Lipp nor Wye Bewley was present, and, to Dirk's relief, the women and children had been sent out.

Cap'n Jim-of-Jim was haranguing them in his humorous and sardonic fashion. As Dirk entered he said, "Here he is. Let him speak for himself."

It was a disconcerting audience to face. They looked down their noses instead of at the speaker. But Dirk took heart from what Cap'n Jim-of-Jim had told him. They were more afraid of him than he was of them; under their great parade of indifference they were men like any others.

"Where's Lipp Bewley tonight?" he asked. "I want him to hear what I've got to say."

"Fishing," a voice answered.

"Fishing at night?"

"Him and Wye Bewley's been out in their skiff all day," another voice said.

"I'm a simple man like yourselves," Dirk began. "Since I was a boy I have followed the water and I know little about shore ways. We ought to understand each other. I was hired in Baltimore to navigate this yacht. The owner said he wanted to go to Diseree Island. It was none of my business what he came for."

The walled faces in front gave him no sign of any response; however, upon glancing at Cap'n Jim-of-Jim, Dirk caught a certain twinkle in his eye which assured him that he had made a good beginning. He continued:

"On the morning after we got here Mr. Prosser, the owner, was found dead in his bed. I suspected foul play, and I suspected that Lipp Bewley was mixed up in it somehow. So I came here to question him. You all know what happened. Lipp Bewley denied knowing anything about the murder, but I believe that he was lying.

"I wanted to carry the dead man back to his home, but when I returned to the yacht I found her aground, and it was impossible for me to get away until today. Meanwhile, yesterday afternoon I found my wireless operator killed in the same manner, and last night a third man disappeared. I found evidence showing that he had been killed on board and his body burned under the boiler."

DIRK felt a certain stir among his hearers, but their faces showed no change.

"When I started up my engine at high water today I lost my propeller. Somebody had been tinkering with it."

This created a visible sensation. The dark-skinned men glanced at each other.

"So you see I'm in bad trouble," said Dirk simply. "I've got to take care of this young lady and this learned man and return them to their homes. I come to you for help."

Their immobility was breaking up. They whispered among themselves, but none addressed Dirk. Cap'n Jim-of-Jim finally spoke up:

"Captain, these men want to know if you believe that it was the people of the island who made this trouble?"

"These men?" said Dirk, including the whole room in his gesture. "No. I have no reason to think it. But Lipp Bewley had something to do with it. I don't say that he was alone in it. The

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chief killer was aboard the yacht. It was Lipp Bewley who brought the yacht here."

This aroused them effectively. Dirk got all their eyes then. "What for did he bring you here?" a voice demanded.

"That I can't tell you," said Dirk. "Can you tell me?"

There was no answer.

"How you know Lipp brought the yacht here?" asked another voice.

"He went away from here this spring, didn't he?" said Dirk. "He came back just a little while before the yacht came. The owner told me that somebody in Philadelphia had described the island to him, and had told him where to anchor. Could that have been anybody but Lipp Bewley?"

No answer.

"After the owner was killed," Dirk went on, "I found this among his papers."

The little map was passed around from hand to hand. It made a considerable impression.

"How you know Lipp Bewley drawed this?" asked a voice. "His name ain't on it."

"Would he put his name on it," asked Cap'n Jim-of-Jim sarcastically.

"I hope to prove it to you when he comes back," said Dirk.

"Lipp was out last night in his skiff and he brought back no fish," growled Joe Siever. "And tonight he's out again. Who fishes at night?"

"I would be willing to lay a bet," said Dirk grimly, "that he is on the yacht right now, and up to no good."

"Who'll come with me to see?" asked Joe Siever looking around.

Before any further move could be made in this direction, there was a stir at the door, and Lipp himself walked in, followed by the slouching Wye. Lipp looked around, grinning.

"Hello!" he said. "Having a meeting? What's up?"

Nobody answered him.

"How are you, Captain?" cried Lipp with assumed heartiness. He had the effrontery to go up to Dirk and offer his hand.

Dirk looked at him steadily. "Catch any fish tonight?" he asked.

A dry note of laughter went around the circle.

LIPP, frightened by the sound, fell back snarling. "Aah, what's the matter with you? What's going on here? This man has been talking against me behind my back."

"Well, now you've come you can hear what he's got to say," put in Cap'n Jim-of-Jim.

"He's crazy!" cried Lipp. "What have I ever done against him? Didn't I save him from the women yesterday? Did I put him back aboard his ship? Didn't I offer to go with him to the mainland and let the police question me?"

The men stared at him in silence.

"You ain't answered his question," said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim. "Catch any fish tonight?"

"What the hell business is it of his what fish I caught?" Lipp cried passionately. "Or of yours either? Fishing's free!" He turned to the others. "Men, old Jim-of-Jim Bewley has always had a down on me. Ain't it so? And now him and this fellow has fixed it up together to pin this trouble on me! You know what Jim-of-Jim Bewley is! A mainland lover! Didn't he marry a mainland woman?"

"Forty years ago," said the old man grinning. "It's a long time."

"Mainland lover!" snarled Lipp. "And him and this other mainlander is working against us people!"

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"I'm satisfied with this island," said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim coolly. "I ain't been off it in fifteen years. How about yourself?"

"Lipp, here, sets up to be better than the rest of you," put in Dirk. "He told me you were ignorant, foolish people. He told me that he was accustomed to mainland ways and knew what was what."

"It's a lie!" yelled Lipp.

"Sounds natural," said the old man quietly, and a crackle of laughter went around.

Lipp appealed to the audience. "You can see they're working against us. They are working to bring a whole crowd of the mainlanders to our island and overrun us!"

This was a touchy point with the men. Dirk saw them scowl and glance at each other uneasily. He said quickly, "There is no man on the island under suspicion but Lipp Bewley . . . As for bringing over the mainlanders, ask him why he brought the yacht here."

"You're a liar!" yelled Lipp.

"Don't say that again," said Dirk quietly.

The word was already halfway out, and Lipp could not stop it. "Liar!"

Dirk let him have it swift as the release of a spring. The hulk of a man went down like a bowled pin. He sat up blinking and holding his jaw, looking bewildered, and the men laughed briefly. Direct action was something they all understood.

"I've been wanting to do that," muttered Dirk.

Cap'n Jim-of-Jim was delighted. "There's a man!" he said. "Well, you all know Lipp Bewley. Which of the two are you going to credit?"

Lipp now took a considerably lower tone. "I ain't saying nothing against the Captain," he muttered sullenly, "but it ain't so that I brought the yacht here, and I can prove it."

"You was mighty anxious to go forward and meet them when they came," growled Joe Siever. "You told us all to stay back!"

"And why was that?" snarled Lipp. "Because you and the rest was going to club them. I only wanted to keep you out of trouble."

"You said you'd send them away," growled Joe.

"Well, he was a friendly man," parried Lipp. "He brought presents . . . You all took his presents, didn't you?"

JOE was silenced. Dirk saw that Lipp was cleverer than any of them—except Cap'n Jim-of-Jim—and might very well talk them around if given the opportunity. He said quickly:

"Never mind that. If your hands are clean there is a way by which you can prove to these men that you had no part in bringing the yacht here."

The islanders were watchful but silent.

"What's that?" demanded Lipp suspiciously.

Dirk produced an old envelope and the stub of a pencil. He said sternly, "Write on the back of this the words: 'Drop anchor here.'"

Lipp stared at the objects full of suspicion and fear.

"This is a trick," he muttered.

"Well, show it up," said Dirk.

Lipp's eyes narrowed cunningly. He looked around from face to face, calculating his chances. "All right," he said finally.

Somebody handed him a stick of wood to put under the paper. Moistening the pencil and putting his head to one side, he commenced to form the letters with painful care. It was a

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lengthy job. When he had finished he handed the envelope to Dirk with a defiant air.

The instant he compared the two lines of writing Dirk saw that he had him. The two sets of crabbed letters showed a dozen peculiarities in common. Dirk went around from man to man pointing out the similarities. In the background Lipp defended himself glibly.

"I told you men it was only a trick. He can make it out any way he wants. Let Joe Siever or anybody write the same words and they'll look just alike."

Cap'n Jim-of-Jim had been right. Dirk, as he went from man to man, saw that this piece of evidence had no weight with them. Only one or two among them could write at all, and none were sufficiently familiar with writing to be able to recognize individual peculiarities. However, for others it would be *prima facie* evidence; he stowed away envelope and map in his pocket.

Lipp, perceiving that he had gained ground with the islanders, amplified his protestations of innocence.

"I swear I never seen Prosser until he landed on this island. I swear I never was in the city of Philadelphia. When the right time comes I can bring forward twenty witnesses to swear I never went away from Criston while I was on the mainland."

"Let that go for the present," said Dirk. "The handwriting experts can decide later whether you're lying or not."

"All I want," cried Lipp passionately, "is to get these mainlanders away from our island."

"I'll take you up on that," said Dirk quickly. "Yesterday you offered to come over to the mainland with me. You could see that the yacht was aground when you made that offer. And while you were aboard the yacht you sent your brother to remove the lock nut from the propeller, so we couldn't get away at all."

LIPP'S face became convulsed with passion. "It's a . . ." he began, but, thinking better of it, changed it to a surly: "'Tain't so. If you lost your propeller, I never knew it until this minute."

"Who else could have done it?" asked Dirk mildly.

"I don't know nothing about that . . ."

While Lipp was speaking, Wye Bewley began edging towards the door. "Stop that man!" said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim sharply.

Several men seized hold of Wye. He struggled furiously and silently like an animal. In the middle of it there was a sharp rap on the floor, and everybody saw the big brass nut that had fallen out from his ragged clothes. The men who had him were so surprised they let go their hold. Wye dived for the door. Somebody hauled him back and the door was closed.

"Well!" said Dirk, grinning broadly, "I didn't expect to see my words proved so soon!"

Lipp's face was a study. "I didn't know he had it," he cried desperately. "I never told him to do nothing to the yacht. You all know what Wye is! He ain't hard good. He's just mischeevous!"

Wye just stared stupidly at Lipp.

"Mischeevous, all right!" said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim laughing silently.

Lipp's voice rose shrilly. "I reckon he got tired of waiting for me in the skiff. He looked around and he seen the yacht's screw sticking out of the water, and he just naturally started

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fooling with it. 'Tain't my fault if a half-wit is mischeevous!"

"Who gave him the wrench to unscrew it?" demanded Dirk.

Lipp ignored the question. He addressed a stream of curses at the stolid Wye. "I'll learn you not to fool with things!" he cried, making for him. He slapped his brother violently on one cheek and the other, jerking his head from side to side. Wye took it, flinching like a child. As Lipp was about to follow up the blows with a brutal kick, Dirk shouldered him aside.

"Cut it out!" he said angrily. "That blustering and bullying don't fool anybody here!"

"I swear I didn't know what he was up to!" Lipp protested.

"Who gave him a wrench?" Dirk demanded of Wye.

The half-wit only stared at him foolishly. What little sense he had had been scared clean out of him.

A tearful note came into Lipp's voice. "I swear it was not my doing, Captain! I'll do all I can to make it up to you. As soon as it is light me and Wye will grapple for the propeller and haul it up and screw it on again. Could I do more? Maybe I will need a little help to put it on."

"Us men will furnish all the help that's wanted for that purpose," said Joe Siever.

"I'll show you that I'm on the square!" cried Lipp. "When the propeller is fixed and the yacht sails away from here I'll go with her, and the Captain can hand me over to the police at Criston or any other place elsewhere he lands. I got nothing to hide!"

Lipp made his appeal to all of them.

Not for a moment did Dirk believe in the genuineness of this offer. It had been made too many times. However, for the moment he appeared to agree. "All right!"

The meeting broke up.

CHAPTER XIX

Murder Again

IT was after midnight when they got back to Cap'n Jim-of-Jim Bewley's house, and Dirk thankfully accepted the old man's invitation to spend the rest of the night with him. Both Dirk and Mona were dropping in their tracks from lack of sleep, and there was not much prospect of rest on the yacht with a couple of proved murderers aboard. The professor seemed pleased also.

There was a spare bed in a room upstairs that was given to Mona. For the professor a shakedown was made ready in another room; while Dirk prepared to lie down on the bare floor of the sitting room. He needed no cushions to enable him to sleep this night. There was no lock on the door, but he wedged a piece of wood under it so that it could not be opened without arousing him, and when he fastened the shutters of the two windows he felt safe enough.

He slept like the dead until Cap'n Jim-of-Jim knocked him up in the morning. The sun was already high. While Dirk was washing at the back door the old man said:

"What you think about Lipp Bewley's offer to give himself up to the police?"

"I think there's a large size trick in it," answered Dirk.

"Right!" said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim, grinning. "You better take him anyhow. The islanders would be glad to get rid of him."

"I mean to take him."

"Tie him up," said the old man.

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"Chain him so he can't play no tricks . . . If you want I'll come along with you to watch him."

"That certainly is kind of you," said Dirk.

"Sho! Such a man is a plague on earth! . . . Have you got a piece of light chain aboard?"

"I don't know. I'll look."

"I got just what we want in my tool shed I'll bring it."

In the kitchen Mrs. Bewley put a fine breakfast of fish and oysters and vegetables before them. It did Dirk's heart good to see Mona eat. Mrs. Bewley was a tiny woman like a little girl who had grown old without growing up, and when she spoke, which was sparingly, it was in a childish treble. Nevertheless, her decisive movements suggested that she had plenty of character. The old man always addressed her as "My girl," and she called him "Cap'n."

In the course of the meal he said, "My girl, I would be thankful for you to get out my Sunday suit. When the Captain steams away from here I'll be going over to the mainland with him."

She looked up startled, but answered quietly, "Very well, Cap'n."

"There's plenty to eat," he went on. "The men will bring you fish while I am gone."

Sh pursed her lips dubiously.

He grinned on observing it. "Oh, we had a big pow-wow last night," she said. "We're all good friends now . . . I'll bring you a nice present from the mainland."

"You should spare yourself that expense, Cap'n," she said quaintly

He saw that she was really disturbed and said slyly, "We'll be taking Lipp Bewley with us when we go."

Her face cleared. "And a good riddance," she said.

WHEN Cap'n Jim of Jim was dressed to go he looked like a figure out of an old print. Mrs. Bewley had shorn the flowing white locks and trimmed his beard. Dirk judged that the decent black suit must have been made for his wedding forty years ago, and preserved with loving care. The high crowned derby hat was of the same vintage. Choosing a moment when they were unobserved, Dirk presented the old man with one of his spare automatics.

They set off for the yacht in a skiff. As they drew near her, Kirkall and Mike ran forward on the deck waving their caps and cheering. Their shouts of joy came over the water.

"Jeese! We're glad to see you back, Captain. We thought you had deserted the ship! We put in one awful night last night!" Kirkall said, and Mike followed it up with more of the same.

"Don't let them fool you," Dirk murmured to Cap'n Jim. "They are certainly murderers."

"I'm not easy fooled," said the old man.

Going aboard, Dirk cut short the protestations of the two hands, and set them to work in different parts of the yacht. One of the island motor canoes appeared around the point of the harbor and bore down on the *Alethea*. It was Joe Siever's boat, the *Josephina*. To Dirk's joy, she was towing the lost dinghy. Joe brought the little boat up to the yacht's ladder. It had been found by a fisherman at dawn, Joe said, floating upside down, a couple miles east of the island.

After the dinghy had been handed over, Dirk, through a megaphone, directed Joe to the spot where the *Alethea* had dropped her propeller, as near as he could fix it, and the islanders set to work grappling for it. Lipp

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Bewley and his brother were aboard Joe's boat. Throughout all the operations of the day Lipp could be seen exerting himself to impress the watchers on the yacht.

They located the propeller, and it was hoisted into the canoe. It was now dead low water, and as the wind had hauled around to the westward just enough to keep the yacht floating clear in the narrow channel, nothing more could be done until the tide rose and fell again. The canoe returned to the harbor.

While they waited, Dirk searched the yacht from stem to stern to see if he could find any evidence that Lipp Bewley had visited it the night before. But everything aboard appeared just as it had been.

At one o'clock, the tide being high, Joe returned, and, passing a line aboard the *Alethea* astern, pulled her around over the shoal. Dirk put out an anchor astern to hold her in that position. All afternoon they waited for the tide to go down, the islanders playing cards and sleeping aboard the canoe, while the anxious little party aboard the yacht watched them—and watched each other.

As it drew on towards six, the stern of the yacht was sufficiently elevated to permit them to start operations. The canoe was warped up close under the yacht's stern, and the islanders went overboard in shallow water. Dirk joined them in order to direct the job.

The sun was setting when the propeller was finally screwed home and locked on its shaft, and the men made ready to leave. Dirk and Joe Siever shook hands on it. Joe looked around at the sky, saying:

"No wind now, but there's no telling from what quarter she may spring up. I'll come back at high water tonight and pull you around so you can steam right out come daylight."

"Good work," said Dirk.

LIPP BEWLEY was standing in the water near by, listening. Dirk said to him, "You can go aboard the yacht now."

Lipp was not prepared for this move, and the usual grin became forced.

"I got to go ashore and get my things, Captain. I can't go traveling in my work clothes. Wye will row me off in the skiff before you're ready to pull out."

"Get in the skiff and row me to the ladder," ordered Dirk. "Wye can fetch what you want from the shore."

Lipp hesitated, scratched his head, glanced at the islanders standing about, and up at the heads looking over the yacht's rail. With a shrug he said, "Well, it's all right with me, Captain, if you say so." He climbed into the skiff.

Dirk said to Joe, "Will you come aboard, Captain, and have a drink before you go home?"

"Don't mind if I do, Captain," said Joe, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand in anticipation.

They followed Lipp into the skiff. Dirk sent Lipp up the ladder in advance, while Joe tied the skiff. On deck Lipp, with his matchless effrontery, greeted everybody familiarly.

"Evening to you, miss, and men, all. Evening, Professor . . . Cap'n Jim-of-Jim."

Dirk and the old man exchanged a look of meaning Dirk said to Lipp, "Put your hands behind you."

Lipp whirled around. "What's the matter, Captain?" Glancing behind him he saw Cap'n Jim-of-Jim pulling a thin strong line from his pocket.

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"No! No!" he cried in sudden terror, and thrust his hands under his arms. "This is no way to treat a man! Didn't I come aboard of my own free will?"

Dirk drew his gun. "Put your hands behind you!" he ordered.

Lipp looked around wildly. "Professor," he cried, "are you going to stand for this? . . . Sailors, will you see a man mistreated like this?"

The professor backed away in a panic, stammering, "I haven't got anything to do with it."

An uncertain look passed over Kirkall's and Mike's faces. Perhaps they were inclined to interfere. But with Cap'n Jim-of-Jim, Joe Siever and Dirk standing by, the odds were too great. They made no move.

Dirk raised his gun significantly, and Lipp's hands shot out beside him. Cap'n Jim-of-Jim quickly had his wrists bound together.

"Now march!" commanded Dirk. "Into the pantry, down the steps and forward into the engineer's cabin."

The old man followed them down. In the little cabin Lipp flung himself on the bunk. Dirk said grimly:

"Watch him while I give Cap'n Joe a drink. If he gets ugly shoot him. It will save us the trouble of guarding him through the night."

"I wouldn't be loath to shoot him," said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim calmly.

Dirk and Joe toasted each other in the pantry. The latter's surly taciturnity had disappeared. He said:

"Us islanders ain't such bad fellows when you come to know us, Captain?"

"Well, neither is us mainlanders," said Dirk.

AS Joe went down the ladder Dirk said quietly, "The half-wit may try to make trouble tonight."

"He ain't dangerous without he's got somebody to tell him what to do," said Joe. "Howsoever, I'll lock him in the cabin of one of the canoes until you leave. He can't get out of there."

Joe rowed away in the skiff. Since they had the dinghy back they had no need of the skiff, and one of the islanders was to row it ashore. As the canoe barked away in the dusk, her crew lined up and gave the yacht a cheer.

"Some change in popular opinion!" remarked Dirk to Mona.

Back in the little cabin below he found Lipp lying on the bunk in the same position, and Cap'n Jim-of-Jim unconcernedly loading his pipe. The latter said:

"I been looking things over, Captain. It's a right good place to chain a skunk." He pointed to a cluster of pipes that ran across under the deck above; a big pipe to carry steam to the windlass forward, and smaller pipes for heating and ventilation. "If we lock one end of the chain around the big pipe, and the other end around his neck, it'll hold him fast."

The old man had his length of light chain and his two padlocks ready. Standing on the chair, he locked one end of the chain around the steam pipe overhead. Lipp Bewley was then forced to sit up on the bed, and while Dirk stood alongside with his gun, Cap'n Jim-of-Jim locked the other end of the chain around his thick neck. There was play enough in it for the captive to lie down if he wished. Lipp offered no resistance, but his little eyes were as venomous as an adder's.

"That's what I call a real nobby necktie," said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim, grinning. "New style. Ties behind."

"I want food," growled Lipp.

"Sure!" said the old man. "When supper is ready I will feed you."

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Later, when they had all eaten, Cap'n Jim-of-Jim announced his intention of locking himself up with Lipp all night.

"All night?" said Dirk.

"Sure. I had a good sleep this afternoon."

"It would be all right if you watched him outside the cabin," Dirk said.

"No, Captain. If I keep him under my eye every minute he can't help himself, nor can he be helped from the inside nor the outside. I will lock the door and the porthole also."

"When you lock the door, turn the key crosswise so it can't be pushed out," said Dirk.

He was secretly relieved by the old man's offer, which meant that he could forget Lipp during the night. He said:

"As soon as we get steam enough to run the generator we'll turn on the ventilating system, so you won't suffocate in there."

They went in and looked at Lipp together. He lay torpid on his bunk with his eyes closed. The cords that bound his wrists together were perfectly tight.

"Captain," said the old man, grinning, "if you fetched me a bucket of fire from under the boiler and a soldering iron I could soon find out the truth of what is behind this plot."

Lipp rolled over and faced them with terrified eyes.

"You see," said Cap'n Jim-of-Jim laughing, "the mere threat of it wakes him up."

Dirk laughed harshly. "No torture," he said. "Leave it to the police to make him talk."

Dirk went out, and Cap'n Jim-of-Jim turned the key in the door.

MEANWHILE Kirkall and Mike had been ordered below to start the fires and get up steam. Dirk took up his stand on the grating overhead, prepared to watch them through the night. He had locked the engine room hatch on deck, and the key to the other door was in his pocket. Mona and the professor were watching in the wheelhouse.

Something new had come into Kirkall and Mike tonight. They were in great spirits, breaking up wood and shoveling coal with a will, continually joshing each other and indulging in rough horseplay.

"Tomorrow night we'll be back in town," said Kirkall.

"And I know what to do when I get there," rumbled Mike.

They whispered together slyly, and burst into a roar of laughter.

And only last night, thought Dirk, they killed a man and burned his body under that boiler! Their cheerful confidence made Dirk secretly uneasy; but with Ashcomb gone, with Lipp Bewley chained up, and with these two men right under his eye, what could happen now?

So the hours passed. Finally steam began to murmur in the boiler and the generator was turned on. Dirk went up on deck to start the ventilating fan. He spoke to Mona and the professor; all right there. On the way down he looked in on Cap'n Jim-of-Jim and was greeted with a cheerful grin. Lipp was asleep. The little cabin was brightly lighted now. Dirk returned to the engine room.

In the middle of the night he heard the bark of the *Josephina's* exhaust approaching, and again locking the door on the two seamen, went out on deck. He and Joe Siever exchanged greetings by megaphone. The yacht was afloat again ,and Joe, picking up her stern anchor, pulled her around into the channel and dropped it again. There was no wind.

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Joe shouted through his megaphone, "I'm going to anchor here astern of you, Captain, so there can't be no slip-up this time. If you want me you only have to come on deck and holler."

"Good work, Cap'n Joe!"

Dirk ran up on the bridge deck. Mona, coming to meet him, whispered, "If you could only get the professor to go below! He drives me crazy with his chatter!"

Dirk said, "Go to your cabin and get a couple of hours' sleep, Professor. Then you can come up and let Miss Prosser sleep for awhile."

"Well, since you suggest it, I will," said the professor.

Mona squeezed Dirk's hand gratefully.

On his way below Dirk looked in on Cap'n Jim-of-Jim again. No change here. When he got back to the engine room he found Mike cheerfully shoveling coal and whistling through his teeth. Kirkall sat on the tool chest with his head against the bulkhead, sleeping.

Four hours later Dirk, with a thankful heart, saw the glass in the engine room skylight turning gray. He went out on deck and breathed in the sweet, cool air of dawn. A fair, still morning; it would be hot later. The tide was down, still ebbing, but the *Alethea* floated clear in the channel with her nose pointing out in the bay. All he had to do was pull up anchors and steam out when it became light enough to see. The graceful *Josephina* was riding astern of him.

THE professor was on watch. Dirk saw him peering timidly out of the wheelhouse door. Dirk ran into the pantry, down the ladder and through the galley to fetch Cap'n Jim-of-Jim. He wanted the old man to stand guard in the engine room, while he took the bridge.

He knocked on the cabin door. "Hey, Cap'n Jim-of-Jim!" he called.

There was no answer. He knocked again; no answer came, and his heart squeezed up in a hard knot. He hesitated for a moment, calling on all his strength to face what was before him. He tried the door. Locked. Putting his shoulder against it, he burst it in.

The door was stopped by something on the floor. Looking around, Dirk saw Cap'n Jim-of-Jim lying there on his face. Lipp Bewley was gone. The chain with its padlock was dangling from the pipe overhead. One of the links had been cut through. The porthole was standing wide open.

For the moment Dirk was unable to take in what had happened. He stood in the doorway staring into the little cabin, dazed, like a man who had received a blow over the head. Cap'n Jim-of-Jim was dead, and Lipp Bewley escaped! How could it have happened?

It was understandable that Lipp might have succeeded in freeing his hands. But where had he procured an instrument to cut the chain? He had been searched three or four times over. And what had the old man been doing while Lipp was freeing himself? Dirk could not believe that he had fallen asleep within three feet of his dangerous prisoner.

Dropping to his knees, Dirk automatically searched the body. Cap'n Jim-of-Jim's gun had been taken from him. As with the two first deaths aboard the yacht, there was no wound upon him anywhere. This death was even more mysterious. There was no indication that the old man had been struck over the head first. In this case the killer varied his procedure a little.

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Dirk's brain reeled when he tried to figure it out. He had proved to his own satisfaction that Lipp Bewley could not have killed Prosser and Tony, yet surely no one but Lipp could have killed Cap'n Jim-of-Jim.

Suddenly Dirk heard a choked cry behind him. The professor had come through the galley without his hearing him. Dirk sprang to his feet. "Quiet!" he said savagely.

The professor, out of his wits with terror, was shaking and pointing at the body. "Another! Another!" he cried shrilly. "God has forsaken us!"

"Be quiet, I tell you!" ordered Dirk.

The professor clasped his hands imploringly. "Captain, for God's sake, get us away from this island! You have steam up, and the yacht is afloat. Oh, get us away from here!"

This insensate squalling was more than Dirk's shaken nerves could bear. Reaching behind the man, he opened the door of his cabin. "Get in there," he ordered, "and keep quiet!"

"No! No! Captain! I implore you not to linger here. If they get you next what will we do?"

Dirk shouldered him roughly into his cabin, and, taking the key out of the door, pulled it shut and locked it.

The professor beat on the door with his fists. "Let me out! Let me out! Let me out!" he cried hysterically.

DIRK, ignoring him, went through the galley and up on deck like a man walking in his sleep. In a voice that sounded strange to his own ears, he hailed the craft astern.

"Hello, Cap'n Joe!"

Presently the sleepy answer came back. "Hello, Captain!"

"Come aboard, will you?"

Joe had no small boat with him. He had three men aboard the *Josephina*. They pulled up their anchor, started the engine, and presently laid alongside the *Alethea*. The boarding ladder had been drawn up the night before, and Joe stepped directly from his cabin roof to the yacht's deck. Dirk waited for him, his face white and set.

When Joe saw his face he cried out, "For God's sake, what has happened, Captain?"

"Quiet!" said Dirk. "Come with me."

When Joe Siever looked into the little cabin his dark face turned clay color. "What's this? What's this?" he gasped.

Dirk didn't have to explain what had happened. There it was.

Hearing their voices, the professor renewed his pounding on the door. They paid no attention.

"Could somebody have helped Lipp?" Joe asked.

"They were locked in here together," said Dirk. "The door was still locked when I came to get him. There's the key lying on the floor."

The color rushed back into the islander's face, and he cursed Lipp Bewley savagely.

"He's swum ashore," he said. "Ain't no place else he could go. By God, us men ain't going to let him get away with this, Captain! We'll catch him for you. Ain't but a small island. He'll make for the woods on the other side. I'll send a party around either way and we'll pinch him between us. In three hours I'll guarantee to have him back on board, Captain."

"All right," said Dirk. "I'll wait three hours."

As Joe turned to go, Dirk laid a hand on his arm.

"Take him with you, will you?" he said, pointing to the body of Captain Jim-of-Jim. "I think—if the girl has

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to face another murder she'll lose her mind."

"Sure," said Joe.

Two men were brought aboard from the canoe. Cap'n Jim-of-Jim was lifted and carried up the steep ladder from galley to pantry, across the deck, and down to the *Josephina*. Through the mercy of Providence, Mona slept through it all. They laid the old man on the cabin roof of the canoe. Joe placed the quaint high-crowned derby on his chest.

"God help the little old woman!" he muttered.

They cranked their engine and the *Josephina* moved off.

CHAPTER XX

In Twelve Feet of Water

SOMEHOW Mona got to know what had happened, though Dirk had no recollection of telling her. Her face became ghastly, but she did not break down. Her first thought was for Dirk. She took his hand in both of hers and pressed it silently. Dirk was profoundly grateful to her for not adding to his trials at that moment.

They stood together on the bridge, looking ashore. Neither said anything. The situation was beyond words. It was only by slow degrees that Dirk's wits began to work again.

Meanwhile they saw Joe Siever ground the nose of the canoe on the beach. Two men lifted the body from the cabin roof and started up to the house with it, Joe walking alongside. The third man started running over the path towards the settlement to arouse the islanders.

After a while the three men came out of the house and started northwards up the beach with bent heads as if searching for tracks in the sand. They disappeared around a point. The thought came into Dirk's head: The solution of the mystery lies somewhere up there!

Dirk and Mona drifted into the wheelhouse. Mona said:

"Speak to me, Dirk. I can't bear your silence!"

"I'm trying to think," he muttered. "My thoughts are all confused."

"Think out loud," she begged.

"Oh, God!" groaned Dirk. "The thing that chiefly torments me is, how did Lipp get the old man? There wasn't a mark on Cap'n Jim-of-Jim. He hadn't even been struck over the head like the others. How could he have submitted to being drugged? And where did the drug come from? I took no chances. I searched Lipp to the skin last night."

"Could Kirkall or Mike have helped Lipp?"

"I can swear that neither one of them left the engine room. Twice I looked in on Cap'n Jim-of-Jim and he was all right. This didn't happen until after Joe Siever had pulled us around, and anchored astern of us."

"Well," said Mona, "the only person besides you and me who was free aboard the yacht was the professor."

"I have that in mind, too," said Dirk. "But that gets me nowhere."

"Suppose it's the professor who has the duplicate key?" she suggested.

"I told Cap'n Jim-of-Jim to leave the key crosswise in the lock . . . Even supposing the professor or somebody else got into the room by some hocus-pocus, how could he have drugged the old man? Cap'n Jim-of-Jim was on the alert. He had a gun. A man is almost forced to believe that there is magic in it!"

"Not that! Not that, Dirk!" she said in swift terror. "There *must* be a natural explanation!"

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After a silence he went on bitterly, "This morning—nothing seems to fit together. Until last night I was certain that Lipp Bewley was working with Kirkall and Mike. I still feel that they must be in it together, but now they seem to be at cross purposes."

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"All night long Kirkall and Mike were laughing and singing and carrying on. Evidently they believe that the success of the plot—whatever it is—is assured. But this morning Lipp Bewley is on the run. He is certain to be caught. You couldn't say that his plot has been a success."

"Maybe Kirkall and Mike don't yet know what has happened to Lipp," suggested Mona.

"I almost wish I had let Cap'n Jim-of-Jim give him the third degree," muttered Dirk.

"That was only his joke," said Mona quickly. "He would not have done it really . . . When they bring Lipp in the truth is certain to come out, Captain."

"If the islanders don't kill him in their rage," muttered Dirk.

KIRKALL and Mike began to pound on the door of the engine room hatch, and to shout to be let out. Dirk went down to them.

"What do you want?" he said curtly.

"Captain, we got steam up," answered Kirkall, "and the yacht is afloat. Why don't we get going?"

Dirk had the notion of trying an announcement on them. "We're waiting for Lipp Bewley," he said with a hard grin.

Their voices sounded completely surprised. "Lipp? Where is he at?"

"He escaped from the yacht last night. The islanders are after him."

There was a silence on the other side of the door, then both men broke into laughter.

"What the hell is that to any of us, Captain?" cried Kirkall. "Let Lipp go and let us get away from here!"

"I'll tell you when I'm ready to get under way," said Dirk grimly. He returned to the bridge more mystified than before.

"At first Lipp Bewley seemed to be the head and front of the plot," he said to Mona. "Now Kirkall seems to be taking the lead. Has Kirkall been the brains of the conspiracy from the beginning, and using his menial position on board as camouflage? It was Lipp Bewley brought Prosser here. Whose plot is it anyhow?"

Mona shook her head helplessly. "When we leave here you must get some of the islanders to come with us."

"I will," said Dirk grimly. "Luckily I have the money to hire them . . . I can lock Kirkall up, but Mike will have to run the engine. It isn't likely that any of the islanders are familiar with steam boilers or engines."

Leaving Mona sitting in the wheelhouse, Dirk paced up and down the bridge, cudgeling his brains to produce some explanation of the seemingly meaningless tangle of circumstances that hemmed them in. At first the plotters were bent on keeping the yacht at the island; now they were keen to get away. Things must have happened in between to which he possessed no clue. How could Kirkall be looking forward so eagerly to his return when he must know that a trial for murder awaited him? How could he be so confident when he was locked up below?

Dirk finally came to a stand at the starboard end of the bridge, leaning on the rail and looking down at the water. He noted abstractedly that it was one of those rare days when the water of

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the Chesapeake takes on a crystalline clearness, and you can see twelve or fifteen feet into its depths.

What had Lipp Bewley hoped to gain by escaping to the island? He was without food. He must know that he would be taken within a few hours. Every man on the island was aroused against him . . .

Gradually Dirk realized he was staring at a dim shape in the green water. All his faculties suddenly leaped to attention. A *body!* A man's body swaying a little in the current, held down by some heavy object that was hidden beneath him. Dirk was knocked breathless by the discovery. He leaned far over the rail, with his eyes staring from his head.

UNMISTAKABLE that thick and clumsy frame, that big misshapen head! It was Lipp Bewley! Lipp Bewley with his hands still bound behind him!

Dirk wondered if his reason had suddenly left him. He looked around to reassure himself; sky, bay, green island unaltered. He smacked the rail under his hand. That was certainly the solid rail of the bridge. He looked overboard again, half afraid to look; there he was! Lipp Bewley!

"Mona! Mona!" he cried shakily.

She came running out of the wheelhouse.

"What is it?"

"Lipp Bewley," he gasped. "He's overboard . . . drowned!"

"You're mad!" she whispered.

"Look for yourself!"

She looked and straightened up with fixed and staring eyes.

"Well, am I right? Isn't it Lipp?"

She nodded slowly. "What does it mean?" she whispered.

He paused, staring sightlessly in her face while his brain struggled to adjust itself. Every conclusion that he had come to since the first murder had to be cast aside now.

"It means — it means — I don't know what it means! But anyhow Lipp Bewley got his! That's one less against us!"

After a silence while they stood staring at each other, Dirk went on slowly, "It means—that I've been after the wrong man from the start. It wasn't Lipp Bewley that planned and carried out this series of murders. I reckon Lipp was just a tool for a cleverer brain than his . . ."

"Who? . . . Who?" she stammered.

"Somebody aboard the yacht; Kirkall? No! It isn't possible that Kirkall could have killed Lipp! It was somebody else!" Dirk's voice hardened. "The professor!"

Mona froze with astonishment. "But —but," she finally gasped, "he's a fool!"

"Maybe he's not a fool," said Dirk somberly. "Maybe he's only playing the fool . . ."

He fell silent while the possibilities of this explanation unfolded in his mind. "Come on!" he said. "Let's go inside and try and dope it out."

They sat on the locker in the wheelhouse. Dirk kept Mona's hand in his.

"Look," he went on, "we know nothing about the professor's antecedents. We don't even know what college he is supposed to be connected with. He appeared from nowhere. Very likely Lipp put him in your father's way. Or, if the professor is the master mind of the affair, he brought Lipp and your father together, and then happened along himself a little later . . .

"As I think it over, I don't believe he is a professor. If he were really a man of learning we would respect him

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though we didn't understand his talk. But all this anthropology stuff sounds like mere jabber. Like something he had got off by heart out of a book . . . Oh, God, what a fool I've been!"

"No! No!" protested Mona, pressing his hand. "It's easy enough to say that after you've worked out the truth for yourself!"

"LET'S begin at the beginning and see how everything fits in," muttered Dirk. "Evidently your father was the first one marked for murder. He was brought here for that purpose. Well, the professor could steal aft through the passage without being seen on deck . . ."

"How could he get in if the key was turned in the lock?"

"Let's assume for the moment that he had an instrument to turn the key. so that he could push it out with another key."

"How did he kill him?"

"That remains to be proved. Poison of some sort," Dirk said.

"Oh, my poor father!" whispered Mona.

"Now, coming to Tony," hastily Dirk went on. "The professor had the run of the yacht. He could be up and down on the bridge deck and nobody would think anything about it. Suppose he came to the door of the wireless room. Tony would just look around at him and go on with his work. Then two silent steps into the room, a blow from behind. How easy! Oh, God! Why didn't I see it before?"

"Anybody would have been deceived," Mona murmured.

"Likely it was the professor, too, who worked on McElderry's fears until he slipped over the border altogether and destroyed himself. That would be another obstacle out of the way. It was the professor, you remember, who was supposed to be guarding McElderry when he stole the dinghy. God! how could I have trusted him! Perhaps he handed McElderry the knife . . . The professor was always with us. He heard all the plans we made to protect ourselves. He had us dead to rights!"

"Where does Ashcomb come into it?" asked Mona. "He wasn't any good, but I cannot believe that he was a party to my father's murder."

"Perhaps not," said Dirk. "His part is still hidden. I suppose they used him in some way and then cast him aside."

"He and the professor hated each other."

"That proves nothing. The professor wouldn't be showing his hand. He wasn't alone in this. He had Lipp, and later he had Kirkall and Mike."

"If Lipp was his man, why should he kill him?"

"Who can tell?" said Dirk grimly. "Perhaps Lipp had come to know too much. He was about to be handed over to the police. Possibly the professor was afraid that he would tell all he knew . . . What's the use of speculating as to the whys when we don't know yet what is behind it all?"

"How did Lipp get—there?" said Mona, pointing.

"Lowered out of the porthole with a weight attached to his body. The engineer's cabin is directly under that end of the bridge."

"The professor's such a little man," murmured Mona.

"But great in cunning," said Dirk bitterly.

"How could he go into that cabin and kill both men without their resisting him?" Mona persisted.

"There you have me. I'm damned if I know."

He got up and looked out of the

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door. "Unless," he resumed when he returned, "he had made sure that both men were dead before he went in."

"How could he do that?"

"He may have poisoned their food last night."

"That's not possible. I cooked their suppers myself, and handed them in to Cap'n Jim-of-Jim."

Dirk was silenced again. Finally he said, "We must remember that we're dealing with a man who has at least some smatterings of science. Enough anyhow to poison men in a highly efficient manner. I've read of men being killed by a poisonous gas being fed into the room where they were."

"There are no openings into the cabin."

"The keyhole," Dirk said.

"That doesn't seem credible."

"Wait a moment!" cried Dirk suddenly. "There is another opening. The pipe that feeds them fresh air from the ventilating system. That pipe and several others come into the cabin from the galley . . . Come on! Let's see if it has been tampered with."

They ran down through the pantry and galley into the little passage forward. No sound came from behind the professor's door. They looked into the engineer's cabin. Mona shivered at the sight of the hanging chain.

The air vent was in the middle of the ceiling. The pipe that fed it was of tin with soldered joints. It was a simple matter to follow it back through the bulkhead into the galley. In the galley it looked all right at first glance, but upon a closer examination they found where a small round hole had been cut into it, and afterwards filled with putty. Dirk and Mona looked at each other.

"Everything played right into his hand," Dirk said. "We had the fan going last night. He had only to lead his gas through this hole and the current of air blew it right into the cabin next door."

"And they died without knowing anything," murmured Mona.

"Sure. But it isn't likely the gas would kill them outright. It put them to sleep and he went in there and finished the job."

"Maybe he did the same to my father."

"Not likely. The portholes and the skylight of your father's cabin were open. He varied his technique to suit the circumstances."

CONTINUE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK

THE lottery situation became so widespread that in one week in July (1935) the Post Office Department issued approximately four hundred and fifty fraud orders against lotteries being mailed into the United States from Canada, Cuba, Bermuda, Mexico, France and Luxembourg. Three hundred and sixty-nine were issued against firms and individuals in Canada.

—*Frank Wrentmore.*

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Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

Could You Qualify as—

Special Agent (G-Man)
Secret Service Operative
Post Office Inspector
Customs Patrol
Immigration Patrol
Anti-Narcotic Agent
Parole Investigator
Prison Keeper
Internal Revenue Agent
Alcohol Tax Agent
Police Patrolman
Police Detective
Policewoman
Fingerprint Expert
State Trooper
Crime Prevention Investigator
Probation Officer
Criminologist
Police Radio Expert

This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.

An Actual Examination Paper for Patrolmen in New York City

THE Police Department of New York City, numbering 19,000 men and costing the city $58,000,000 a year, prides itself on being known as "the finest." It is the largest police force in the United States and is equal in size to the London force. It has given the world many famous detectives. When civil service examinations for patrolmen are held thousands of young men who have successfully met the medical and physical strength tests (published in last week's issue) must submit to the mental tests.

In slightly abbreviated form here are the actual questions put to thousands of candidates at the last patrolmen test in 1934. This probably is the stiffest patrolman test given in the United States. Can you make the mental grade? A minimum rating of 70 is required. The highest actual ratings were between 83 and 86.

Government, Elementary Duties, Police Action—Weight 60 points, 3 points to each correct answer. Time limit for all answers 2 hours. (Note: while these questions apply to New York City and State, you may apply most of the questions to your own city and state and consult city officials or the public library for correct answers to compare with your own). Do not use scratch paper and no more than six words to any answer.

Government—Name the official department, board, commission or other official body which issues licenses, permits or certificates for each of the following:

1. To operate an airport?
2. To be an auctioneer?
3. To operate a billiard or pool table?

MANY SUCCESSFUL PATROLMEN TRIPPED ON THIS CATCHQUIZ!

Q.—Which of the following is the chief reason why a police force is necessary? (1) to direct traffic. (2) to direct strangers. (3) to record fingerprints. (4) to enforce law and order. (5) to prevent the escape of prisoners. Answer only one question in not more than 1½ minutes to earn a perfect score.

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4. To operate a motorcycle?

5. To move a building in a public street?

6. To conduct a massage parlor?

7. What city official acts as mayor whenever there is a vacancy in that office?

8. For how long a term is a state assemblyman elected?

9. What city department has jurisdiction over the construction of a dance hall?

10. What city department sells city property?

11. What city department assesses the valuation of real property in the city?

12. If a person receives a blow on the head and becomes unconscious what injury probably caused the unconsciousness?

Elementary Duties—In the numbered spaces below write in the word or words that will make the following sentences complete and true: If a person violated the National Bankruptcy Act he would be tried in the——13——. Petty larceny is a ——14——whereas grand larceny is a ——15——. A found the door of B's house open and entered to commit a larceny. Even if he did not take anything he would be guilty of ——16—— and tried in the ——17——. A policeman should always have his ——18—— on him and be properly ——19——.

Police Action—On the following subject write one page only. You will be judged by your knowledge of the subject matter, by ability to arrange and express your ideas and by handwriting, neatness, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

20. Two boys lost a ball in a sewer. They lift the manhole cover and one of them climbs down into the manhole. He fails to reappear after a long interval of time has passed. Detail what you would do in this case?

Arithmetic—20 points, 2 points to each correct answer. All answers must be completed in half an hour.

21. 2 2/5 is what part of 2½?

22. Change 29 to 37ths?

23. Divide 211111111 by 9.

24. Add $987.52, $10.02, $1000.00, $527.97, $0.01.

25. Two ships, 2,500 miles apart, are sailing towards each other, one at the rate of 87 miles a day, the other at the rate of 85 miles a day. How far apart will they be at the end of ten days?

26. A cargo worth $9,000 was insured for 9/10 of its value at 3 1/3%. In case of shipwreck what would be the actual loss to the owner?

27. 54 is 12% of what number?

28. Express 21/40 decimally.

29. Divide 1.6 by 6.25.

30. Multiply 137.3 by 0.27.

Memory—20 points, 4 points to each correct answer. Study the following story and the questions below it for 10 minutes. Decide what the answers to these questions should be. Then, without looking again at the story, write your answers to the questions, not more than one line to each question and do not rewrite the questions.

30. MURDEROUS MOTORIST WANTED—A general alarm was sent out last night for a 1927 Buick sedan carrying license plates 4 V 0734. The car is somewhat dilapidated, paint badly worn, no spare tire in the tire frame at rear. Glass in the right headlight is gone and right side of bumper hangs low. The driver of this car passed a car driven by Richard Thompson of Trenton on the right, then turned in in front of him, so closely that Thompson had to jam on his brakes to avoid a collision. At the next red light on Broadway at 150th Street, Thompson stopped his car near the curb and got out. People in other cars heard him protest to the driver of the Buick against such reckless driving. The Buick driver answered angrily, started his car as Thompson stepped in front of it. Knocking Thompson down he ran over him and drove away. Thompson's chest was crushed and he died in an ambulance. The Motor Vehicle Bureau states that the license plates were issued to Peter Gray of Elmsford, N. Y.

Q.—(a) Where was the homicide committed? (b) Why did Thompson leave his car? (c) What was the license number of the Buick? (d) State two facts about the Buick that would help to identify it. (e) To whom were he license plates issued?

You have 10 minutes to answer these questions and you must not consult the statement of facts.

FAMOUS MIFFS

He was a newlywed with a dream of getting on the force and becoming a dick some day at $3,000 per year. In the test for patrolman he was asked: Q.—What is

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the chief thing that makes Niagara Falls famous? A.—It's a hide-away for honeymooners.

ANSWERS TO PATROLMAN TEST

Government, Elementary Duties, Police Action—1. Dept. of Docks. 2. City Clerk. 3. Dept. of Licenses. 4. State Motor Vehicle Bureau. 5. Borough President. 6. Dept. of Licenses. 7. President, Board of Aldermen. 8. One year. 9. Dept. of Buildings. 10. Sinking Fund Commission. 11. Board of Taxes and Assessments. 12. Fractured skull. 13. United States District Court. 14. Misdemeanor. 15. Felony. 16. Unlawful entry. 17. Special Session Court. 18. Shield (or star on badge). 19. Armed.

Police Action—20. I would summon an ambulance and notify the desk officer with a view to having notified the Emergency Service Division (Rescue Squad) the Bureau of Highways and Sewers and the ambulance. I would then divert traffic and prevent a crowd from gathering. The other boy I would detain and question, secure his name and address and take the statements of any witnesses. Pending arrival of the ambulance I would try to rescue the boy in the sewer. If successful in the rescue I would administer such first aid as necessary and, with the boy rescued, I would take his name and address also the name of the doctor and the hospital from which he responded, ascertain the boy's injuries, if any, and record all these facts in my notebook and order the boy taken to the hospital. If the boy were dead I would notify the desk officer so that he might notify the medical examiner (or coroner). With the permission of the medical examiner (or coroner) I would send the body to the morgue, the other boy to the station house on a charge of juvenile delinquency and disturbing the manhole cover. Before leaving the scene I would be certain that the manhole cover was replaced. At the station house I would have the boy's parents notified and arraign him before the proper officer. I would finally make a full report to the commanding officer.

Arithmetic—21. 24/25. 22. 1073/37. 23. 23456789. 24. $2525.52. 25. 780 miles. 26. $1170. 27. 450. 28. .525. 29. 37.071.

Memory Test—31. (a) Broadway and 150th St. (b) To protest to Buick driver against reckless driving. (c) 4 V 0734. (d) dilapidated car and right headlight glass gone (e) Peter Gray, Elmsford, N. Y.

Answer to Catchquiz.—4 To enforce law and order. This covers everything and is the chief reason.

Next Week—How U. S. Secret Service Operatives are Selected

World's Cruelest Man

THE world's cruelest man is now in prison, according to Judge A. Welsh of Philadelphia. The judge sentenced Gottlieb Albert Dether, 58, German immigrant, to three years in Lewisburg Penitentiary, when he heard him accused of:

Having nine "wives" and ten children; of beating his women with straps and cutting their hands; of pouring hot coffee on a child's back; of making counterfeit money; tapping gas pipes when the fuel was turned off for non-payment of bills; of falsely swearing to citizenship papers and pretending devotion to religion to get a minister to intercede for him to save him from going to jail; and then repaying the minister by annoying his wife and other women in the church congregation.

—*J. T. Champion.*

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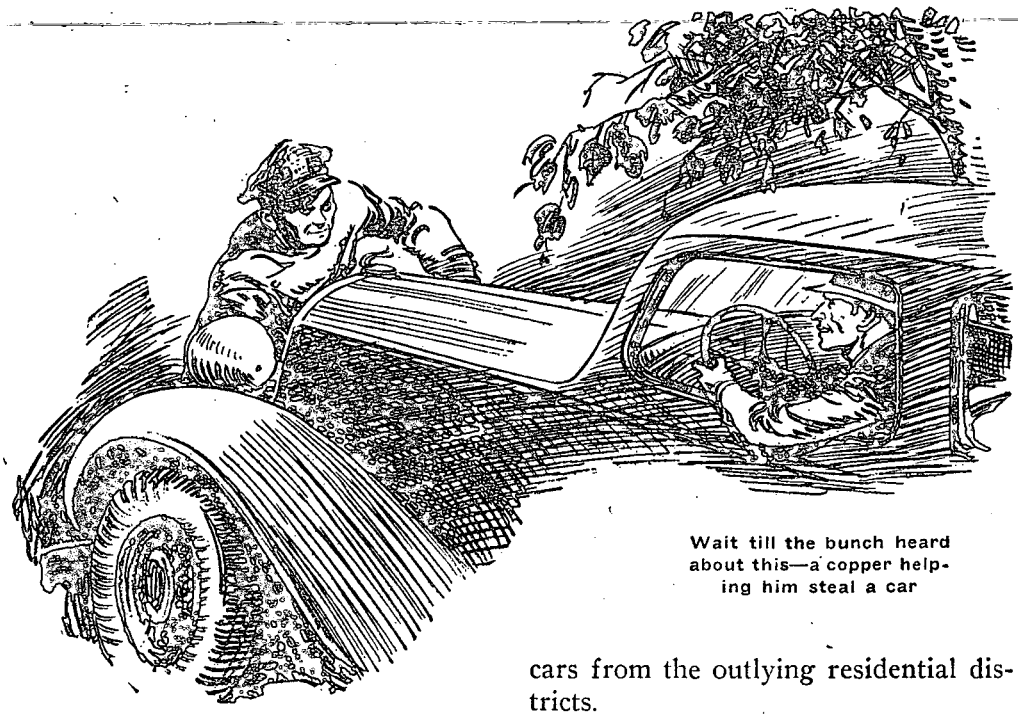

Wait till the bunch heard about this—a copper helping him steal a car

Outsmarted

By

Robert E. Larkin

A Weak Battery, a Weak Heart, a Weak Head—and a Car, a Car-Thief, and a Patrolman

FRANKY CORDONI was one of the cleverest automobile thieves in the city, and he knew it. More than anything else, he attributed his success to his clothing, which at all times, was the finest money could buy. "Appearance is everything," he told his friends. Also, he never stole a car from the business center of the city. He was different. He stole his cars from the outlying residential districts.

Anyone could steal a car from in front of a busy office building. It took a clever thief to steal from under the very noses of the people who let their cars stand in front of their homes.

At this moment Franky was on his way to get just such a car; one he had been watching for several days. It was not a high priced job, but one which was easily and quickly disposed of.

Jauntily dressed, and sure of himself, he looked anything but a thief as he briskly walked along the clean, even sidewalk, overhung with large, neatly trimmed trees.

It was dinner time. Franky sniffed the odors coming from the homes he passed. Wives getting dinner ready for their husbands who would soon be home. Onions here. A steak there. It made a fellow hungry, all those odors. He'd postponed his evening meal so that he might take care of the little matter of the car.

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The car was standing exactly where he had expected it to be, and not a soul was in sight. As for the people in the house, they would be too busy eating to bother about their car. It was locked. Therefore no one could possibly steal it.

As was his usual custom, when Franky came abreast of the car, he acted as though it were his own—taking care, of course, to enter from the side opposite to the house. If anyone should happen to look out of the window, he would in this way be more or less obscured from their view. Sometimes, too, the doors were locked and he needed a minute or two to overcome this slight obstacle.

Franky encountered no obstacles, however. The door was open. He entered, slid over under the wheel, and busied himself with the ignition switch. Again he had no trouble. But he knew he wouldn't. He had stolen too many cars of this type not to know exactly how to manipulate the switch.

He pressed the starter, which responded, but weakly. A low, faint grumble that picked up and died, picked up and died, then died altogether, was all the response Franky got to his repeated pressing of the starter. The battery was too weak. He wondered about the generator; whether or not it was working. He couldn't get out and crank the car, that was sure. Too much risk. The best thing he could do was to abandon the car; maybe try it again at a later date. Too bad, but—well, such were the breaks.

He was in the act of getting out, when he was addressed; and of all people, by a policeman. Where he came from or how, Franky had not the slightest idea. He was there, that was all that mattered to Franky.

Sweat broke out on his brow, and his heart began to pound. He tried to swallow and couldn't. He had been in some tight spots, but never one like this. He managed to nod, however, as the policeman spoke.

"Having trouble getting it started?" the officer asked jovially.

"Yeah," Franky managed to croak. "Battery's low."

"Battery's low, eh? Gotta crank? If you have, give it to me and I'll spin it while you press on the starter. Between the two of us we ought to be able to get the darned old heap of iron going."

Franky lost no time in looking over the back of the seat. As luck would have it, the crank lay on the rear floor boards, as it usually does. Franky handed the crank to the policeman, who walked around to the front of the car, inserted the crank, and, when Franky nodded, spun the engine. The motor caught, coughed several times and settled to a low, even hum.

WAIT till the bunch heard about this, Franky thought. A copper helping him steal a car. Boy, this was good! Of all the dumb people in the world, flatfeet were them!

"Well, there you are, sir," the policeman smiled, handing in the crank. "You better get that battery charged the next time you are downtown. I may not be around to help you. And say—" the officer pulled a large gold watch from his pocket and looked at it—"if it's not too much to ask of you, and you're going anywhere near there, I wish you would take me down to the station house. I'm off beat now, and would like to get down to the station to change clothes. Of course, I don't want to put you out. I just thought you might be going down that

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way." The officer's brow lifted questioningly.

Franky hesitated, but only for a moment. The sooner he got away from that neighborhood the better. He was lucky to have gotten by this long. What if somebody in the house were to look out and see them? He'd be in a jam sure enough. He couldn't very well refuse to take the cop, though. It would look bad. It might make him suspicious.

"Why, sure thing," Franky offered with forced gayety. "Hop in and let's get going."

The ride to the station house did not take long, and as the officer alighted, he turned to Franky.

"Would you care to step inside a moment?" he smiled, and winked broadly.

That wink meant only one thing to Franky. A drink. God knows he needed one. He couldn't, though. What if the call came in while he was in the station? The thought gave him cold chills. But the cop was waiting. He couldn't afford to arouse suspicion at this stage of the game. He might as well go in and get the drink and have it over with.

Entering the station, the policeman greeted a number of his fellow officers and came to a stop with Franky before the desk sergeant, busily writing in a large book. In about half a minute the sergeant looked up.

"Your name?" he asked, automatically.

"My—my what?" Franky demanded. "You're mistaken. I'm not being—"

"Oh, yes; you are," Franky's policeman told him, his eyes hardening suddenly. "The next time you try to steal a car, don't try to steal mine!"

On and Off the Blotter

NEARLY five thousand weapons were seized by New York City police during the past year. They included 3,714 pistols, 559 rifles and shotguns, and 556 miscellaneous weapons ranging from blackjacks to fountain pen gas-guns. The annual dumping of the accumulation took place ten miles at sea. High officials of the department supervised the job this time, because a gun used in a shooting last spring had already been in the hands of the police and was supposed to be at the bottom of the sea.

BUSINESS men throughout the nation are being organized to combat racketeering. The Commercial Crime Commission has been formed after competent study to decide upon practical methods of stamping out this evil. Racketeering costs legitimate business four billion dollars a year in tribute exacted and losses resulting from refusal to pay.

BURGLARS were looting the home of George D. Baldwin, former trapshooting champion, at West Chester, Pennsylvania, when he returned with his wife and daughter and two friends. The burglars robbed them of money and jewelry, made them prisoners, and finished rifling the house at leisure.

—*Emory Black.*

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They're Swindling You-!"

The "Test Your Own Eyesight" Racket Exposed

By Frank Wrentmore

This is the nineteenth of a series of articles exposing business rackets that cost you billions of dollars every year! Mr. Wrentmore is an authority on swindles and frauds, well known to legal, financial, and commercial associations.—The Editor.

"HELP! Stop this machine, somebody! Cut off the power! My hand's caught!" Jim Blake's frantic cries brought his shopmates on the run. Ed Palen, the foreman, threw the main switch and rushed to the side of the injured man. Later he expertly reversed the machine and released the badly-lacerated hand. He applied a rude tourniquet as first aid and then accompanied the stumbling Jim to the company's hospital.

After the hand had been dressed, the company doctor tried to determine the cause of the accident. He had known Blake for the ten years he had been in the shop, a steady, sober worker who had worked on the same machine for more than five years. Part of the doctor's job was to learn what *caused* expensive accidents.

That evening he went to Jim's home. After he had replaced the dressings he said to Jim, "Been sick?"

"Nothing important, doctor, a few pains in my head, that's all."

"Well, Jim, I'd say there was something wrong with your eyes if you weren't wearing glasses. How long have you had them?"

"Only a couple of months. I reached the same conclusion you did, so I sent to Chicago for a pair."

"Who examined your eyes, Jim?"

"Well, I'll tell you, doctor, I bought them by mail. The company sent me one of their eye testers and my daughter helped me test my eyes. I don't remember the name of the company but I've got their letters somewhere." His daughter soon found and brought them to him.

Dr. Emery looked over the flamboyant claims made in the literature: "*We will send you glasses on ten days free trial. Not one cent to pay unless you are satisfied.*"

"Jim, would you put a part on your machine without having it fitted?"

"Why, no, I might ruin the machine."

"Well, believe me, your eyes are more delicate and harder to replace

"I am glad to endorse the program of *Detective Fiction Weekly* which will bring to its readers the truth about rackets and racketeers. No man can be swindled if he knows in advance what the swindler is going to do—and nobody *wants* to be swindled."—Edward L. Greene, General Manager of the National Better Business Bureau.

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than any machine. You'd use micrometer measurements for repair parts on your machine and yet you bought glasses without any measurements at all.

"They sent you a simple magnifier to test your eyes with, when the crudest sort of test shows that your eyes are astigmatic and call for the most careful measurement and fitting. It would have been cheaper for you in the long run."

Jim looked at the bandaged lump at the end of his right arm. "You mean, doc, that those glasses made me hurt my hand?"

"Yes, and here's why: the firm who sold you those glasses are now out of business. The government investigated and issued a fraud order. I suspected what had happened to you and I brought a copy of the government's report on which the fraud order is based. It shows that some of the glasses put out by this firm were ground from ordinary window glass instead of Crown glass and that—but wait, let me read part of it to you.

"'The memorandum alleges that the filling of orders and the prescribing of lenses were handled by untrained and inexperienced clerks. The method by which a customer was expected to test his own eyes was by means of a so-called "eye tester" which the company furnished. Sixteen post office investigators sent in for these "testers" and ordered glasses on the basis of self-examination of their eyes. "With the exception of two persons who were not available," says the memorandum, "these witnesses testified at the hearing." All but two or three were unable comfortably or clearly to read letters upon the respondents' distance chart at ten feet or the text of respondents' reading chart at thirteen inches with the aid of the glasses furnished by the respondent.

"'In no instance did the respondents furnish glasses which corrected the vision of the user or which were suitable for continuous use to see clearly near or far nor which were exactly suited to the requirements of the user as represented in respondents' advertisements and circulars. All of the witnesses who examined their eyes with respondents' measuring devices in order to furnish the data for these test orders were suffering from astigmatism which is a refractive error caused by irregularities in the curvature of the cornea of the eye. Some had a slight degree of astigmatism, others had greater degree, and some had irregular astigmatic eye defects of a mixed character. However, the evidence shows that they carefully followed the directions for the use of respondents' devices for the self-examination of the eyes and that they furnished the information requested by such directions, namely: a statement as to the test lenses with which they could *"see best"* for each eye for reading and for each eye for distance.

"'The evidence further shows that astigmatism is so prevalent that from eighty to ninety per cent or more of all persons who need glasses to correct refractive errors of vision also need correction for astigmatism.

"'The respondents, as the evidence shows, were fully aware of their inability to properly fit glasses by mail where persons suffer from astigmatism . . .'

"There, Jim, you see what you were up against?" Dr. Emery ended.

Next Week—The "Buy a Farm" Racket Exposed

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Solving Cipher Secrets

A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first cryptogram each week is the easiest.

M. E. OHAVER
"Sunyam"

THE historic setting for Romeo's "On Lee Shore," last week's Inner Circle cipher No. 36, is provided in the subjoined letter. Like its companion message, "The Dark Lagoon," No. 132 of last June 1, this cipher also relates some of the personal adventures of Romeo while he was attached to the "Nipsic" as an officer of the United States Navy.

DEAR SUNYAM:

On March 16, 1889, in the reef-bound, open harbor of Apia, Samoa, occurred a maritime disaster that startled and appalled the people of two great nations, and brought sorrow to the homes of many gallant men, caused by the wreckage of three German gunboats and three American men-o'-war. The German vessels were the "Olga," "Adler," and "Eber"; those of the United States were the "Trenton," "Vandalia," and "Nipsic," which succumbed to the joint efforts of wind and water coming over the vast expanse of the Pacific with ever-increasing violence, and taking a toll of 151 lives.

In the accompanying cryptogram I have endeavored to describe the sounds and sensations while immured below decks, with hatches battened down, waiting for death and not knowing at the precise time it would come.

Yours sincerely,
ROMEO (JOHN C. MOORE),
306 W. Main St., Waynesboro, Pa.

The thrice-used ending -BVP afforded entry to Romeo's message. Symbol B (frequency 13), occurring 5 times antepenultimately, responded as *i*, while P (14) appeared 5 times as next-to-last symbol, suggesting *n*. Upon trying BVP as *-ion*, the final group RPPBSBNREBVP (*-nni-i- - -ion*), noting the repeated R, then yielded *annihilation;* and so on.

Arcana's division problem, to start this week's puzzles, employs a 10-letter key word numbered from *0* to *9*. *Zero* may be found by inspection. O — B = V and V — D = O will then limit D to two values. Millexes provides the phrases BO NGY and QBNG H (also note BN) for entry to his contribution. Having identified these words, try HOV, QHNYS, and GHSV.

In David Gordon's message, comparison of DGR, DXX, and DGRVRTXYR will unlock ZD and VZDGXKD. TXKEDBZE will then readily follow, checking with BYR and ZE. In the next crypt, by Nautilus, UKRLKD may be approached through RLKE and KE. BIRKDQR, BZEKBW, and RLZD will then drop into place. The foreign proper names here are all keyed with the English text.

ZPZV may be guessed in Gitano's message by noting how its component symbols are used elsewhere in the message. KRKP, RGVZ, and RFFV will follow. A solution of E. V. Morton's pangrammatic Inner Circle and the answers to all of this week's puzzles will be given next week. The asterisks in Nos. 38, 39, and 40 indicate capitalization.

No. 37—Cryptic Division. By Arcana.

```
OUK)EVKDI(VOE
 CDU
 ---
 IOOD
 IBU I
 ---
  VDE I
  VKKC
  ----
   VBA
```


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No. 38—Strange Solids. By Millexes.

" BAY *BB," DF GYHKL BN DBOPD BO QHNYS, HOV " GFN BAY," DF GHSV BN DASHNAGYD DNYYT HOV QBNG H JYTNBOU XFBON HEFKY NGY EFBTBOU XFBON FZ QHNYS, SYAYONTL GHKY EYYO VYKYTFXYV BO NGY THEFSHNFSL.

No. 39—Subtle Cylinder. By David Gordon.

UKEF, HBUURYF, BEH PABSMLBSMF BYR FXAH VZDGXKD YRFDYZSDZXE ZE *TYBESR. PKD DGR DRBY-UBF " TXKEDBZE NRE " ZF PBYYRH. *NBYZF NXAZSR FBO ZD ZF DXX RBFZAO SXESRBARH, BEH DGRYRTXYR HBEURYXKF.

No. 40—Difficult Problem. By Nautilus.

BIRKDQR YSGQZDS *LZGBZHZGZ SD *FZTK, GKHB *LZGBFZTFZT UKRLKD *HKGZTBZ, KE DBZWGO BZEKBW WBZQLBV NWSF *FSGSHZK RLZD RLKE DTR QWZQHBV!

No. 41—Pretty Lady. By Gitano.

AUXZ ZPZV EUGB GLUP, DFVP UGHV UGVH UGZV; DGOY KNZL DXAZ, KNFN, HZBV, RFFV, KUVF AXPV. EGSZ EZZL FTZD—NGDU DXSV KRKP; DXAZ RGVZ—UFTZ LGZV.

No. 42—Curious Cache. By E. V. Morton.

MLDF EUKPAZX OGKF OHPYJ NZAPH OLD YLTAPUTUTQ NPTF SGPUTA BZCZHX, WUR.: LTFD, BPIZ, PNZAVFXA, LEPH, BPYUTAV, KGOF, ALEPR, AGKSGLUXZ, OZKFH, YPKOGTYHZ, RUKYLT, HPEUX HPRGHU, ZAY.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

31—Key

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
H	E	A	V	Y	R	O	C	K	S

32—Unemployed youth makes survey of various human natures. Spies on rich, poor alike. After one hour, concludes, " Some people shift for themselves, others have a chauffeur."

33—" Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats, brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats, followed the Piper for their lives."—Browning.

34—Gold mining booms—prospectors young and old zealously search streams, mountains, and old claims, since larger price is being paid for precious metal!

35—Bully bushwhacker bushwhacked black bootblack; appropriated black boot-blacking brushes, also twelve nickels for car fare.

36—Hurricane wind shrieks. Mountainous seas. Anchor chains snap. Collision. Violent shock. Spars crash. Timbers rend. Destruction. Death. Annihilation.

Answers to this week's puzzles will be credited to the solver in our Cipher Solvers' Club for February. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

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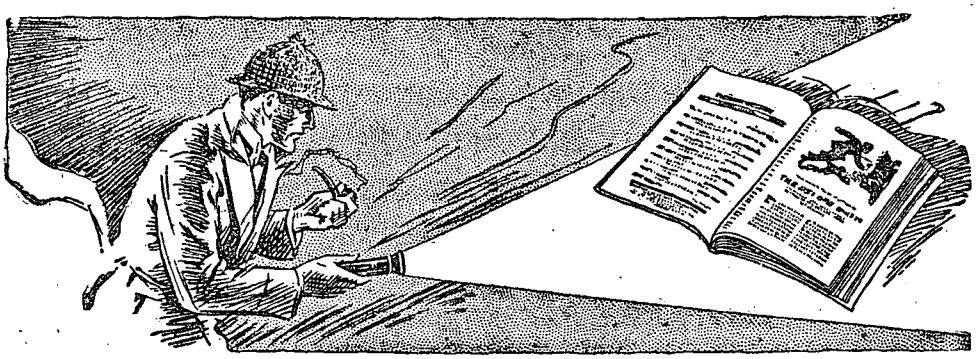

Flashes from Readers

Where Readers and Editors Get Together to Gossip and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind

TWELVE or fifteen criminals, most of them unknown to the public, control the rackets of New York City. That is the report of the extraordinary grand jury of which Thomas E. Dewey is Special Prosecutor.

It is a striking verification of the conditions pictured in "The Racket Smashers," by Richard Wormser, which is continued in this issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

The report declares that the underworld chiefs are so well disguised, and their activities so screened by underlings and by the reluctance of the business men whom they have intimidated to testify against them, that at least two more years will be required to uproot their system of extortion.

"The Racket Smashers" reveals what that system is. It's a thrilling story, and as you finish it you will get a picture of New York City rackets and racketeers that the newspapers will verify—two or three years from now.

Will one or more of our lawyer-readers answer Miss Enid Brown's interesting question? In the case referred to, Marie Stanovich was poisoned by radium smeared on the keys of her typewriter. She had not died when the article was written, but as far as we know radium poisoning is incurable.

DEAR EDITOR:

The "Glittering Typewriter Keys"—did Marie Stanovich ultimately die of the radium? If she was sure to die, even though she might live a few years, could Kopriva be tried for murder, or only attempted murder? The strange part of the matter is, that if she is bound to die it *is* murder; and yet, who knows? A cure might be found for radium poisoning and then it would not be murder, only an unsuccessful attempt! Is there any precedent in legal and criminal history to go by?

A faithful supporter,
ENID P. BROWN,
Chatsworth, Ontario, Can.

We'll have to ask Bedford-Jones about *Mary,* though we suspect that *Riley Dillon's* affections are fickle. *Mme. Storey,* by the way, appears in ARGOSY.

DEAR EDITOR:

I think "Red War" remains the best story you have published this year, although the *Riley Dillon* stories are fascinating. If one does not demand plausibility, Brand's "Spy" stories are

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absorbing. It is curious, though that *Mary Michelson,* his supposedly devastating heroine, never comes to life. I trust he is going to marry *Hamilton* to *Louise Curran.*

I miss the *Jimmy Wentworth* stories, but do not enjoy *Lester Leith* for the same reason that I can't read Van Dine's stories—too much pointless, tiresome dialogue. To use one of the ARGOSY'S writers as contrast, Tuttle's dialogue is always natural, entertaining, and in character.

Another objection: in "The Eye of Isis" the hero, described as a young college graduate, tells the tough little heroine—whom we are asked to believe is charming—"You *hadn't ought to have* come here . . ."

Can't you get more of Poate's stories? They are always out of the ordinary. And by all means let us have more of *Mme. Storey.*

Setting fiction aside, I think Major Russell's true stories are far and away the most interesting thing you print. Robert Sneddon's true stories are good reading also, but I don't like the sentimentalized autobiographies of criminals that you printed this last year, written by a second person. Norma Millen's story is an exception. I was interested in that.

There is a point about *Riley Dillon* that I want to have cleared up. *Riley* becomes infatuated with some California *Mary*—who somehow did not seem as attractive as various other ladies *Riley* has encountered. Bedford-Jones leaves us with the impression that *Riley* is leading *Mary* to the altar. But in the succeeding stories we find *Riley* still a freelance, encountering other charmers, but no word or hint as to what has become of *Mary!* I don't want *Riley* to marry *Mary*—although I want him to stop thieving eventually. Still, I don't like to think of *Mary* this [illegible]. Won't you please Bedford-Jones clear up this mystery?

Sincerely yours,
WARDEN WALTER,
New York City.

---

like color in fiction backgrounds, And the Indians were really there, Miss Weston.

DEAR SIR:

"The Blood Trail," by Chidsey, in the Nov. 23rd issue impressed me so much that I want to tell you we liked it.

A book on that locale, told with just that rush and spirit, would be a sure success, I think. And a motion picture would be one of the year's knockouts.

It has adventure as well as mystery—it has even Indians—it has definite atmosphere very vividly portrayed. It's so much more than an ordinary detective story, that we want to ask you if there can be more stories like it.

The mere crook-and-cop story is wearing thin by so much repetition and this is delightfully different, and more exciting since the reader is carried through strange places in unusual company.

Sincerely,
WANDA WESTON,
New York City.

Happy to say that nothing fatal has overtaken the five old favorites whose absence Mrs. Bazzoni has noticed. They are having more adventures, and we're waiting ourselves with equal impatience for the authors to report them.

DEAR SIR:

I have been reading your magazine for years and years. Just how many I cannot at present state, though it is around the ten mark. I like it immensely. So does my husband. We fight over who gets first chance at it. I like all the stories, especially *Lester Leith, the Lady from Hell, Riley Dillon,* all of Max Brand's, *The Park Avenue Hunt Club,* all of Erle Stanley Gardner's, *Daffy Dill, Calhoun, Battle McKim* and the *Griffin.*

But I do have a grudge against you for discontinuing stories about *Jimmy Wentworth, Sidney Zoom, Señor Lobo, The Patent Leather Kid,* and *Jigger Masters.* What happened to them, got killed or died a natural death, or buried alive? Please resuscitate them and win my best thanks.

Sincerely,
MRS. C. BAZZONI,
Astoria, N. Y.

Nor time or place nor discomfort nor position cn bilk the detective story fan from the swift completion of the fiction-lover's bunds.

DEAR SIR:

Why worry whether one must use two hands or not to read DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY? After I read two pages I no longer know how I am holding it. If such topnotch writers as MACISAAC, MCCULEY, BRAND, CUMMINGS, GARDNER ENGLAND, and BEDFORD-JONES can't make a person forget body position, time, and place, that reader is hopeless.

By the way, my favorite character appearing in your pages is the *Silver Mask.*

Very truly yours,
GERALDINE GUHL,
New Cumberland, Pa.

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COMING NEXT WEEK!

THREE big thrilling novelettes in next week's issue! MARDI GRAS MURDER, an exciting *Morton* and *McGarvey* story by DONALD BARR CHIDSEY; THE MISSING LEGS, a mystery by NORBERT DAVIS; and another adventure of the daring and beautiful *Vivian Legrand* in THE LADY FROM HELL by EUGENE THOMAS. Short stories filled with action, mystery and clever detective work are FALSE FRONT by EARL W. SCOTT; FRAMED IN BLOOD by ARTHUR K. BARNES; THE SCENT OF DEATH by CHARLES ALEXANDER. Thrilling instalments of the two serials, THE RACKET SMASHERS by RICHARD WORMSER and THE ISLAND OF FEAR by HULBERT FOOTNER. Other stories, features, Illustrated Crimes, and unsual departments contribute to the entertainment in the biggest weekly detective magazine on the newsstands.

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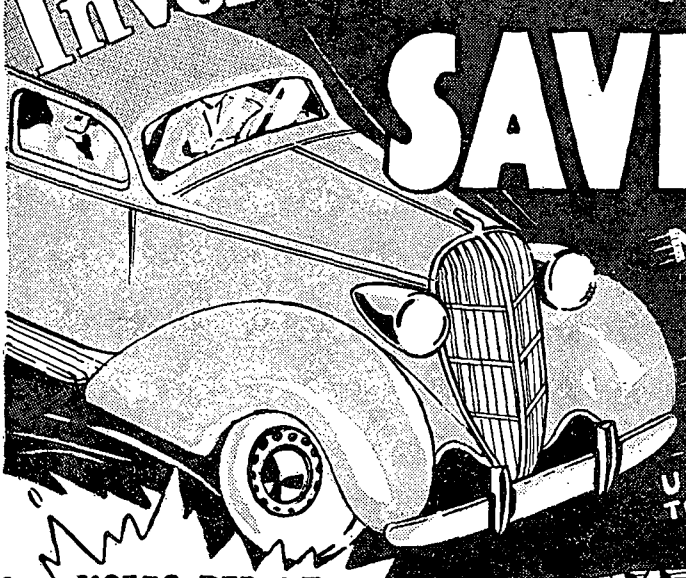

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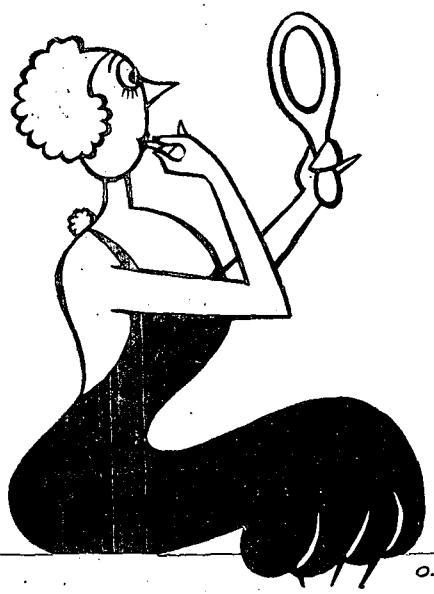

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